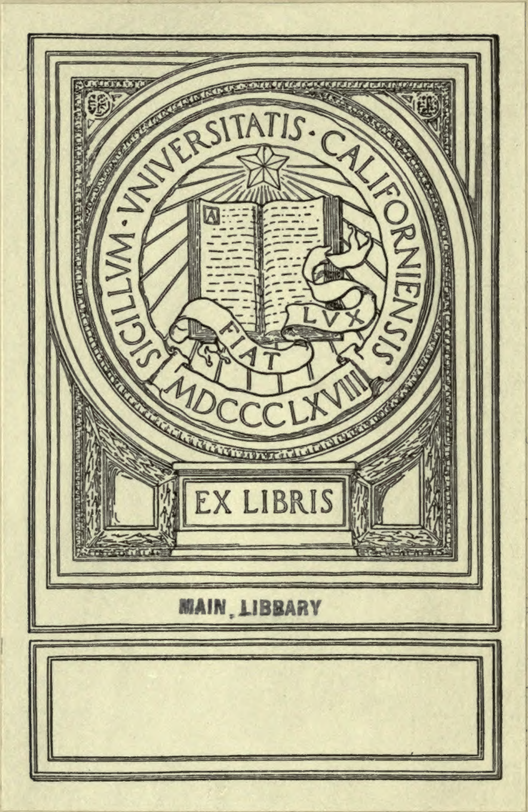

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THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH

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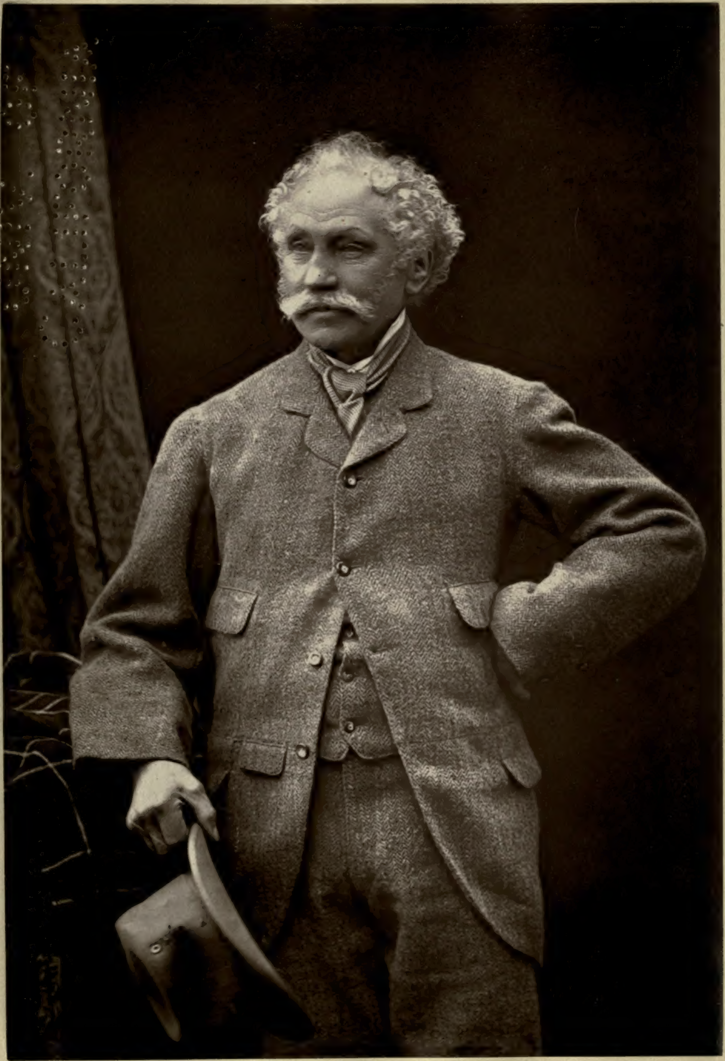

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

THE

MOOR AND THE LOCH

CONTAINING

MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS IN ALL
HIGHLAND SPORTS

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN

NEW EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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To the Memory of

A VERY DEARLY LOVED BROTHER,

WHOSE TRAGIC DEATH IN HIS OWN LOCH LOMOND,

ON THE 18TH OF DECEMBER 1873,

CALLED FORTH SUCH DEEP SYMPATHY AND SORROW,

THIS NEW EDITION OF

'THE MOOR AND THE LOCH'

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

JOHN COLQUHOUN.

939473

“Ilk flow’r that blooms on foreign fell
Wad mind me o’ the heather-bell;
Ilk little streamlet’s jouk and turn
Wad mind me o’ Glenourock burn.
Lands may be fair ayont the sea,
But Hieland hills and lochs for me!”

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PREFATORY MEMOIR.

FOR nearly half a century 'The Moor and the Loch' has stood at the head of books on Scottish Sport, and each successive edition has testified to the care and labour which the Author bestowed upon keeping his work well abreast with the times. Down to the time of his death, in 1885, he was closely engaged in correcting and revising 'The Moor and the Loch.' The sixth edition having been for some time out of print, advantage has been taken of the opportunity to reissue the work in a form more adapted for a practical manual of Sport. Mr Colquhoun was not less a naturalist than a sportsman, and many of his chapters, though extremely valuable and interesting as recording the experiences of a keen observer, were of less direct service to the sportsman than his instructions and experiences with the gun and the rod. In the present edition, everything of practical value connected with stalking, shooting, and fishing has been retained, and the book still affords a complete guide to both the moor and the loch. Disquisitions have been condensed to their results; controversies have been superseded by the Author's latest conclusions; and subjects which in the interval since the appearance of the first edition have become more or less obsolete, have been omitted. The Author's final corrections have been incorporated in the present text, which in its more handy form will now, it is hoped, in the words of the Author, prove "worthy of the favour which, as a Handbook of Scottish Sports, has for so long been accorded to it."

John Colquhoun, the author of 'The Moor and the Loch,' was born at Edinburgh on 6th March 1805. His father was Sir James Colquhoun, Bart. of Luss, and chief of the Clan Colquhoun. His mother, Lady Colquhoun, was a remarkable woman in the religious circles of her generation, and her example and teaching largely influenced her family. At a very early age John Colquhoun displayed that love of nature and of sport which continued to characterise his life. The scenes of his boyhood were well calculated to foster his special tastes.

"As was natural," writes his eldest daughter, "the Rossdhu boys loved the free wild life in the beautiful scenery by which they were surrounded; and it was no small grief to them when, each season, they were torn from the shores of Loch Lomond to pursue their studies in Edinburgh. From his childhood, natural history was a passion with John. There was not a wild song-bird whose note was not familiar to him, nor a creature whose habits he did not discover. The child of nature, his knowledge was all gained from personal observation, and not from the brains of others; and it was this, perhaps, as much as anything, which gave such a charm to the man and to his writings.

"Strange pets there were in those days at Rossdhu, the very same which John Colquhoun encouraged his own children to have in later days. Squirrels, owls, brown and white, were amongst them; tortoises, hedgehogs, and, best loved of all, (non-poisonous) snakes, sent as highly valued presents from the south of England; while the nurseries and schoolrooms were full of rare and common birds, to the grief of the nurses and tutors!"

Educated by private tutors, and for a short period at the

High School of Edinburgh, the boy's education was supplemented in very important respects by Tom Yule, a footman who had come to Rossdhu from Mellerstain, then one of the foremost sporting establishments in Scotland. "An expert swimmer, a noted race-runner, understood all the arcana of trapping vermin, was an excellent judge of a terrier,"—Tom, with all these accomplishments, found an impressionable subject for his instructions in his young master. With the exception of Professor Wilson, whose lectures at Edinburgh University he afterwards attended and admired, Tom seems to have been the only one of his teachers whose memory John Colquhoun greatly valued.

After leaving college, Colquhoun joined the 33d, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, and was employed in still-hunting in the wilds of Connaught. The duty was uncongenial if occasionally exciting; but the opportunities of sport were unequalled. The fox-hunting in the plains of Boyle, where, after the manner of the Irish, the foxes are hares, was a new experience. "The leaps were chiefly over stone walls, and many of the horses tipped them in the most dexterous manner. So deftly did they touch the top of the wall, that after a horse and his rider had cleared, I have seen a tottering stone rattle down directly afterwards. Yet from this cause I never saw an accident. In fact, the 'tippers' were the safest horses on the 'plains of Boyle.'" One of Mr Colquhoun's mounts was "a famous black horse, well named 'Pepper,' one of the best wall-clearers and soundest horses of county Connaught. His price was £70—a long figure for an Irish horse of those days."

In August 1829 Mr Colquhoun exchanged from the 33d into the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards, then stationed at York. While with this regiment, he hunted in the Beverley country on a horse called "Brown Stout," and received an amount of kindness and hospitality there which he never forgot. He only spent a few years in the 4th Dragoon

Guards, and "on leaving the service," he records, "I sold 'Brown Stout' to Mr Tait of Milrig, for some time Master of the Fox-hounds in Ayrshire. His price was £100; and Mr Tait affirms that he was the best horse he ever had."

Aquatics were at this time a popular novelty in Scotland, and in these Mr Colquhoun took scarcely a less interest than in field sports. With the "Whistling Swan," a Loch Lomond gig, and a crew which at the last was reduced to a scratch one, he competed at the Helensburgh Regatta against the "Waterwitch," the champion boat of the Clyde, in a four-mile race, and came in victorious. His own account of the race is: "The agreement was not to 'toss oars'; so when the gun fired we bounded off together, our opponents' stroke much the quickest. However, I had taken a hint from the former race, and rowed an even, determined pull, persuaded that our rivals' stroke was too short and quick to last. At this stage my brother 'skiffed' the water, coming down on my back. He was right again in an instant, but in that moment the Waterwitch jumped past us two boat-lengths. 'Fifty pounds on Glasgow!' exclaimed an enthusiastic citizen of the western metropolis. No takers. Both gigs rowed resolutely to the buoy, when our steersman whispered, 'We are close to the other boat!' 'Keep inside,' I answered. Our adversaries were evidently 'pumped out.' Hurrah for the hills of Glen Luss and Glen Fruin! The steersman of the Waterwitch rather bungled his round of the buoy; and our lad, following my advice skilfully, took the inside place. To save my brother, I backed with all my might, and when both gigs were fairly turned, our bow was level with their mid-oar. 'Give it them home now!' shouted the stroke, quickening the time. The bow responded well, and the Whistling Swan shot past the Waterwitch like a Derby winner. The race was then really over. Our plucky opponents, however, struggled bravely for a time, and did not stop till it was absurd to continue longer. We came in nearly a quarter of a mile ahead, amidst the ringing cheers of the crowd. The silver cup, with its inscription, is of course an heirloom at Rossdhu."

At the only International Boat-Race which has ever taken place between England and Scotland—the race between the professional watermen of the Thames and the Cardross ferrymen of the Clyde — which came off on the Mersey, 30th October 1839, and ended in a victory for the Thames, Mr Colquhoun held the office of starter.

After his marriage in 1834 with Frances Sara, fourth daughter of E. Fuller Maitland of Park Place and Stansted Hall, a lady of many gifts and accomplishments, Mr Colquhoun continued to reside in Scotland. From that time the records of his life are written in 'The Moor and the Loch.' He was not merely a mighty hunter, he was also a great naturalist—in the unscientific sense, it is true; but still he possessed a knowledge of the habits and characteristics of beasts and birds that only long years of penetrating observation and kindly sympathy could have accumulated. He had much of the spirit of Gilbert White in his character, and, unlike the great majority of sportsmen, his interest was as great in studying as in killing his prey. Wanton destruction of animal life always called forth his strenuous opposition, and he was ever ready as the champion of any animal that seemed threatened with extinction, from the eagle to the badger. His tastes as a sportsman were those of the older school; he confesses his "sympathies with the Scotch poacher of fifty years ago, who for sheer love of sport sallied out over the well-known hills, and with his quaintly broke collie-dog and rusty single-barrel enjoyed himself to the full." He was no friend to the *battue* or to driving; but although he did not disguise his dislike for practices which he regarded as derogatory to the true sportsman, he accepted them as established institutions, and laid down sound rules for conducting them. For himself, he ever dealt with game in a fair and manly spirit, looking rather to the quality than to the quantity of the sport, and laying little stress upon enormous bags. In the deer-forest Mr Colquhoun had in his younger days few equals among his contemporaries, but the catholicity of his sporting tastes was against his taking the foremost place in one particular line. With the rod he was not less fatal than with the rifle, and it may almost be said that it was his example and precepts that brought the *Salmo ferox* within the sphere of practical angling. No other sportsman of his generation had enjoyed the same opportunities of gaining so extensive an experience of Scottish sport as had John Colquhoun. There is scarcely a county where sport existed in which he had not rented at one time or other shootings or fishings. He had lived by the banks of the great salmon rivers, the Tweed, the Tay, the Dee; was at home on the Perthshire and Ross-shire lochs as much as on his own Loch Lomond; and had shot grouse and deer in every quarter of North Britain.

The powers of keen observation and capacity for reflection which Mr Colquhoun carried with him to the moor and river-side naturally led him to record his sporting experience. It is now forty-eight years since 'The Moor and the Loch' was first published, and though in the interval the book has been entirely remodelled, and in a great measure rewritten, it was accepted at once as a high authority. Another popular work of Mr Colquhoun's was 'Salmon Casts and Stray Shots,' which, together with its successor, 'Sporting Days,' was incorporated in the later editions of 'The Moor and the Loch.' Several lectures on his favourite subjects, which had been delivered to Edinburgh audiences, were also published by him, and expanded in the more recent editions of his principal work. In his later years, after outdoor sport became an impossibility, much of his time was devoted to the perfecting of 'The Moor and the Loch,' which he wisely thought would remain the worthiest memorial of his life and work.

Mrs Colquhoun died in 1877, and with her death John Colquhoun closed his career as a sportsman. "For two years," he writes in 1878, "I have rented no shooting, nor taken out a game licence, and seldom even handled a fishing-rod. The pleasure of these sports has faded since the faithful and generous heart which sympathised with them has ceased to beat. After a rough day on the moor or by the salmon river, the sound of her dear voice was a joy I fully valued, till it was hushed for ever on earth." In his later years, too, he had to mourn the loss of his eldest and his youngest sons, both like himself distinguished sportsmen.

His active habits did not desert him while strength lasted, and down to a very short time before his death he was, as has been already mentioned, busily occupied with the revision of 'The Moor and the Loch.'

"All through his illness of five weeks," writes his eldest daughter, in a touching little monograph dealing with the deeply religious side of her father's life, "his mind was kept in perfect peace, having underneath him, as he said, 'the everlasting arms.' The day before he was taken, he 'saw a vision—heaven opened!'—uttering his wife's name as if he actually saw her. On the morning of the 27th May 1885 he called his daughter to him, saying, 'Don't you think I am "wearin' awa'"? I saw it in Angus's face!'

"The last words he spoke were to Dr Angus Macdonald, three hours before all was over, 'At evening time it shall be light.'"

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THE MOOR AND THE LOCH.

INTRODUCTION.

The superiority in pluck and endurance of hardship which the inhabitants of the British Islands have so long held over the other nations of Europe, is pretty generally admitted to be in no small degree due to the love and practice of our out-of-door recreations. Nowhere is this more fully acknowledged than in our army, where year by year additional facilities are given to colonels of regiments from headquarters for granting those under them as much sporting leave as is consistent with attention to duty. Many of our most distinguished commanders have openly expressed the opinion, that although a man who devotes all his time and energy to military duty may be an excellent and valuable parade officer, yet in actual service, when anything dashing was done, it was, in nine cases out of ten, by those who loved the hunting-field or the grouse-mountain far better than the barrack-square; and that these were generally the most efficient officers in an arduous campaign.

The impetus given to the mental as well as the physical powers by healthy exercise no one denies, though hundreds profess themselves unable (more truly, perhaps, unwilling) to submit to the arduous experiment. An ordinary walk is not enough for a strong man who is at the same time an earnest student. In order to keep his mind up to the mark, he ought to accustom himself to hardship, and inure his limbs and muscles to fatigue. No doubt it is *hard laws* to a man in middle life, who has never done more than his "Saturday's walk," and a short stroll on the other days of the week, to send him up the steep mountain-side with a gun under his arm; but even he, by perseverance and practice, will become astonished at his own powers, and delighted with the probable result—health and strength of mind and body.

It is needless to say how few of us would endure this continual hardship and fatigue, were it not for the present excitement, which impetus is supplied by the love of hunting, innate, though often latent, in most manly and independent characters. I always sympathised with the Scotch poacher of fifty years ago, who, for the sheer love of sport, sallied out over the well-known hills, and with his quaintly broke collie dog and rusty single-barrel enjoyed himself to the full. *He* never sold his game, but when he had more than his family could use, gave the rest to his neighbours. That is past and gone; the English squire first drove the poorer Scotch one out of the market, and he in his turn has been superseded by the millionaires from London, Manchester, and America. Incredible prices are given by the latter for all our first-class deer-forests and shootings, while the second-rate beats are as eagerly contended for by the men of less ample means; and now it is Sassenachs, protection, and keepers over the whole Highland range. This picture may not be a very bright one to a high-spirited and patriotic Scotchman: still it has its light as well as its shade. The almost fabulous rents paid for all the best beats bring money into the country; and the sportsmen, to say nothing of being fleeced by the natives, are lavish of their purses, which also swells the stream of wealth flowing into the Highlands. To recur to my opening sentence, not a few fine aristocratic young Englishmen, who without this rugged attraction would have been confined to the hunting-field, stubbles, and turnips, are initiated into the more hardening and fatiguing sports of the deer-forests and the grouse-moors. These are the young fellows to endure privations and suffer hardship; they have done it before for amusement, and can do it again for duty.

Highland touring was in vogue long before the *furore* for its wild sports began, and to the "Lord of the buried past" we owe the interest first excited in the northern wilds. A Scotch tour, however, was in former days an expensive and often very uncomfortable luxury. Most of our southern neighbours were quite content with one trial, feeling satisfied that they had seen enough of the uncultivated region and its savages to last them all their lives. But when the country was opened up by steamboats and railways, and the natural consequences of better inns and conveyances followed—above all, when good shootings at very moderate prices were in the market—no wonder that even the cream of England's aristocracy looked forward to their autumn sojourn in the North as the most charming portion of the whole year.

Forty years ago there were no Scotch sporting books, and the few English ones were merely works of instruction and dry detail. Now, however, the Scotch books on mountain, forest, and river sport occupy no mean place in our national literature. How much these books stimulated the demand for Scotch shootings it would be difficult to say; at all events, wild shooting rose prodigiously in the market after their publication. Forty years ago capital small ranges were to be had for £150 to £180. The rapidity with which these rose to thrice that amount was most disheartening to keen grouse-shooters of moderate incomes. The competition for the first-class beats was even greater, and I have been told by agents that the claimants bid each other up to such a figure that they were sometimes ashamed to take the highest offer.

Not many years ago there was always a tempting array of shooting-quarters advertised in February and March. At present, all the most desirable quarters are secured before coming into the market at all. The man of fortune who comes down to the North in early spring, reasonably confident of finding a really good shooting, has often to return sadly disappointed: there are none to be had for *love* or *money*.

DEER-STALKING.

THIS first of British sports can only be enjoyed by the few Highland proprietors who still maintain their forests, and those to whom their permission is extended. Still, if the many keen sportsmen who are panting to try their rifles upon a gallant stag were thoroughly entered at deer-stalking, they might find less cause to regret their privation than they now imagine. In the first place, no sport is more ruled by the weather; again, one is so dependent on the skill and tact of the stalker, in whose hands, for some time at least, you must be content to act like a mere puppet. And when the deer are driven, a single false move, or the mistaking of a signal by the hill-men employed, may spoil all. In every other kind of shooting the sportsman ought to trust to his own resources and foresight; but in deer-stalking, unless he has passed his life in the forest, and is thoroughly acquainted with every corrie, crag, and knoll, he had much better trust to those who are. Without this knowledge, it is impossible for any one to tell how the wind will blow upon a given point: sometimes it may be north on one side of a hollow and south on the other; and I have seen the mist moving slowly in one direction along the hillside, and half an hour afterwards the very reverse, without any change in the wind. To account for this on the spur of the moment would often puzzle the scientific; but the unlettered hill-man, who has only been taught by the rough experience of the crag and the blast, though unable to talk theoretically on the subject, yet, from constant and acute observation, will confidently predict the result; and, taking advantage of every shifting change, will bring you within fair rifle-distance of the unsuspecting herd.

To a novice, even though an expert rifle-shot, the first sight of "the antlered monarch of the waste" will almost take away the power of hitting him. But to any one accustomed to the sport and constantly practising it, the sameness abates somewhat of its intense interest: for it admits of no variety but the age and dimensions of the stag. In wild-fowl shooting, the excitement is kept alive by the various kinds of game that present themselves, from the magnificent hooper to the tiny teal. On the grouse-mountains there is often the uncertainty whether the next point may be the red, or the "jetty, heath-cock," or whether a twiddling snipe may spring, or an Alpine hare start unexpectedly before you. It is the same uncertainty which gives zest to cover-shooting. The golden-breasted pheasant, the russet woodcock, the skulking hare or dodging coney, may all successively appear.

I do not mean by the above remarks to depreciate deer-stalking. It is sport for princes. I only offer them as consolation to those who undervalue the amusement within their reach, by exaggerated ideas of that above it.

No man with good nerves need despair of becoming a tolerable rifle-shot, as the great art is to take plenty of time—in fact, to shoot as coolly at a deer as at the target. The American backwoodsmen with their ill-balanced rifles can hit the jugular vein of an animal feeding or moving about, with unerring accuracy, at thirty or forty yards. Every one must see how much this depends upon nerve and coolness; and these settlers are taught self-command, which is the basis of their dexterity, from their earliest years. I recollect being shown, by the owner, a rifle which he considered a *chef-d'œuvre* of American workmanship. The most cool-headed forester of

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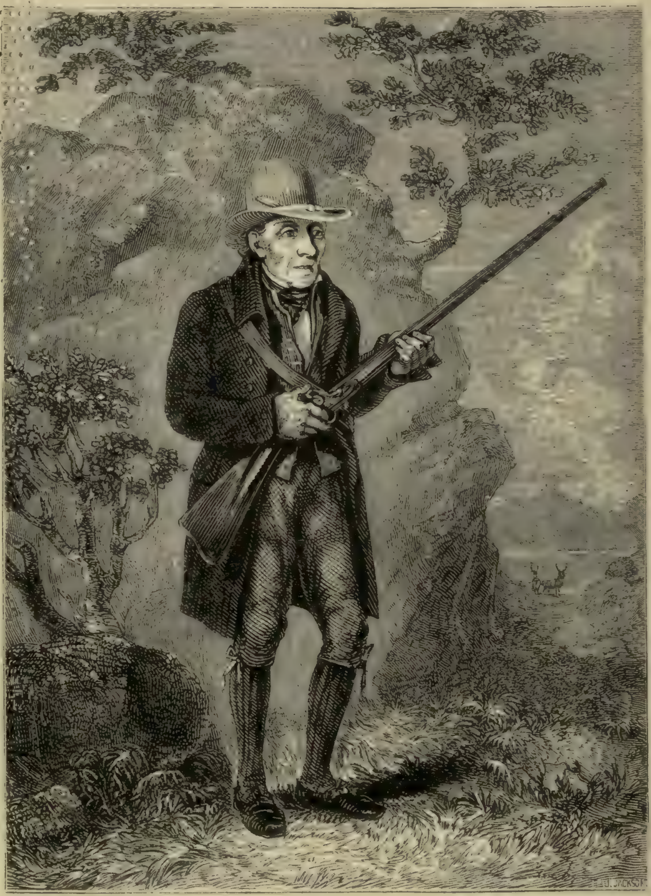

A Relic of the Clan Colquhoun,

Drawn from Life.

With his trusty flint-locked long-barrelled rifle of the last century.

our country would have been puzzled to do much execution with it at first. It looked and felt exactly like a toy, with its peaked and silver-mounted toe- and heel-plate, long unbalanced barrel, and ludicrously small bore. Our rifles, on the contrary, are beautifully poised, and their weight enables us to take a much steadier aim at a long distance; while the ball, from being much larger, is less affected by the wind. I daresay, however, if a Highland deer-stalker and an American wood-ranger, both finished adepts in their own way, were fairly matched, each would have a sovereign contempt for the dexterity of the other.

I have constantly observed that the performers most to be depended on with the rifle are what are called "poking shots"; for although the first-rate hand with the fowling-piece may often bring down the deer running in admirable style, yet upon any unexpected fair chance presenting itself, he is apt to fire too quick, forgetting the different style of shooting which is required for a rifle; while the slow man, however taken unawares, always gives himself time for deliberate aim. Any one, also, who has been practising much at snipe, or other quick shooting, will, unless quite on his guard, be almost certain to miss the deer until his hand is brought in; after which, when he again returns to the snipe, they will stand a better chance of escape, from the poking manner in which he will at first be inclined to fire at them. As a boy, I remember being much perplexed to see a gamekeeper miss a fair shot at a deer, when a few days before he had killed seven swifts out of eight flying past at "full bat"; while his father, the old forester whose likeness I have given, could scarcely have touched one, and yet seldom missed a rifle-shot. There was another man who generally accompanied them in their stalking expeditions, and whose shooting was a still greater puzzle. Although not left-handed, he shot from the left shoulder, being unable to close his left eye, and was as slow a performer as ever pulled a trigger. Flying shots he invariably missed, and, at last, seldom fired at; but ground game, except rabbits, had no chance with him. Nothing could flurry or put him out of his shooting. If the shot was not intercepted, and he was only allowed plenty of time, it was certain death.

I had twice an opportunity of seeing these three men fairly tested with the rifle. Some deer being discovered near the top of a high hill, it was arranged, as all their passes were well known, to drive them with some shepherds and their collies. My brother and I begged hard to join the party, and were placed under charge of the gamekeeper, whose pass was one of the best. Before starting, however, the left-shouldered man wished to fire off an old load, being afraid to risk it at the deer. It was suggested that he should shoot at a hare. We had not gone far when one rose about forty yards off. Even now I think I see the cool way in which he raised his rifle, and, allowing poor puss a free stretch of thirty yards, fired. The hare dropped dead, and, when we went up, she was fairly struck between the shoulders. After a time we were safe in our passes, and the driving-party commenced their manœuvres. We soon heard the yelp of the dogs, and, shortly after, the floundering of a deer in some mossy ground immediately above the pass. Presently it made its appearance, crossing us at about sixty yards' distance. It was a beautiful chance. Taking deliberate aim, the gamekeeper fired. To our astonishment and chagrin, the deer, which had been moving slowly along, bounded forward, frightened enough, but unhurt. No other chance was obtained till near the end of the day, when the old forester fired a tremendously long shot, and struck the deer, which ran for a few hundred yards, and then dropped.

Another time, when the deer had taken the water, there was a general scramble to the shore. A boat was quickly procured, which the cunning animal no sooner saw bearing down than it turned short round, and was within a few yards of grounding, when the three aforesaid stalkers were ready to fire within fair distance. The left-shouldered man took deliberate aim at the head, the only part above water, and cut off the horns close to the skull. The deer now struck ground, and when bounding along the shore was missed by the gamekeeper, but immediately brought down in admirable style by his old father. That a man could miss a deer, and yet knock down double shots one after another at game, used to appear a complete problem to me; especially as one of his rivals could not hit a bird at all, and his father as a game-shot was not to be named in the same day with him. After a little practice myself, the solution was plain. I have seen this old man in his *eightieth year* bring down a deer *running*, and one season had some venison sent me, killed by him when ninety-one years old!!

As I consider this forester the finest specimen I ever met with of a Highlander of the old school, I may perhaps be allowed to mention some of his peculiarities apart from his professional avocations. His words, like his shooting, were slow, but sure to tell. When addressing his superiors, his manner was marked by the greatest courtesy, without the least approach to servility. He was well read in ancient history, knew all about the siege of Troy, and talked with the greatest interest of Hannibal's passage over the Alps. On one occasion, when several gentlemen were talking on a disputed point of history, he stepped forward, begged pardon for interrupting them, and cleared it up to their utter amazement. His memory was excellent, and nothing gave him greater delight than old traditions, legends, &c. The last time I saw him, he gave us an account of some of the Roman Catholic bishops of Scotland, with characteristic anecdotes. In politics he had his own peculiar opinions, was particularly jealous of the encroachments of the "Great Bear," as he called Russia, and thought the Allies committed an irreparable error in not partitioning France after the battle of Waterloo. No present found greater favour than the last newspaper; and it was curious to see the old man devouring its contents without spectacles. He would not have been a true Highlander had he not been a firm believer in all their superstitions. Two instances of second-sight he related to me as having happened to himself; although he was very unwilling to talk upon the subject, and I have often noticed his evasive replies to those who questioned him. I premise my account by saying, that wherever he was known, his word was never doubted, and I would have believed it as implicitly as that of the proudest peer in the realm. One day, when returning very tired from some sporting expedition, he met an acquaintance, accompanied by a young man whom he also perfectly well knew. The first stopped to ask "what sport?" He gave a short answer over his shoulder, and saw the young man walk on. That afternoon he heard he had been killed by a fall from his cart, at the very time of this *rencontre.* Upon questioning his companion the next day, he said there was no person with him. The other instance happened one rainy evening when looking over his kennel. He saw a man with a graip cleaning out the gutter, and called to know who had desired him to do so. The gutter-cleaner walked slowly towards him; but something having arrested his attention in the meantime, he lost sight of him, and could not make out how he had disappeared. Upon inquiring of the overseer, he said this man was unwell and confined to bed. He shortly afterwards recovered, which was sufficient confirmation to the old forester of the truth of his vision; for in all cases of second-sight, where the object approaches, it is a sure sign of recovery, and when it recedes, of death. Another of his prejudices was the lucky or unlucky "first foot." Half the people of the country were one or the other with him. There was a canty old carle of a herd whose happy cheerful face was enough to banish care from every other brow: but the old forester had unfortunately met him on the morning of some unlucky day. Now, as it happened that this conscientious old herd—whose boast it was, "I never did ahint my maister's back what I wadna do afore his face"—was generally one of the earliest astir, he was oftener the "first foot" than any other body; and as he came, crooning some old Gaelic song, with his staff over his shoulder, and gave his blithe salutation, "Goot mornin', goot mornin'! goot sport, goot sport!" a stranger would wonder at the look of gloom which overshadowed the forester's face, and the scarcely articulate grunt which was his only reply, sometimes followed by the half-muttered exclamation, "Chock that body!" To shoot a wild swan was reckoned a most unlucky feat. One severe winter, when after water-fowl with another man, four hoopers were discovered close to the shore. His companion eagerly pointed them out; when the old forester, who had most likely seen them first, coolly replied, "You—see—John,—we'll—just let them alone!" The only thing not truly national about him was substituting a pinch of snuff for a quid of tobacco; and when out on the hills he has often expressed his belief, that the moss-water he was sometimes obliged to drink would long ago have been the death of him, had he not always followed it up by the antidote of a pinch which "killed all the venom."

The 'Edinburgh Evening Courant' of May 27, 1843, has the following notice of the subject of these remarks: "Died, on Inch Lonaig, Loch Lomond, in the house in which he was born, nearly a century before, Robert Colquhoun. When seven years old he was taken into the service of Sir James and Lady Helen Colquhoun, and for the last few years of his life it used to be his proudest boast that he had served four of the chieftains of Colquhoun, his fealty descending unimpaired from sire to son. When the suns and snows of 70 years had rendered him less able for active duty, he requested to be allowed to end his days in the rugged and romantic island of his birth. Dear to the old Highlander's heart was this lone isle. Its rocks are shadowed by the finest yew-trees, which in ancient times supplied the country with bows—the loch around it is deeper and more blue. The island is also celebrated among the clan as having been the scene of an interview between the chief and Rob Roy, which ended in their being on the best terms ever after. The funeral of the old man, sublime in its very simplicity, was truly characteristic of himself. The little fleet of boats all abreast, keeping solemn time with their oars, on their way to the churchyard of the picturesque village of Luss, where, surrounded by the mountains he so often climbed, quietly reposes this faithful servant of the chiefs of Colquhoun."

But the character of my old friend has beguiled me into too long a digression. I must now return to the rifle.

Every man before firing at deer must be thoroughly acquainted with his own piece—a point even more important with a rifle than a shot-gun. Under eighty yards it will most likely shoot a little high; and if the wind is at all strong, it will alter the direction of the ball fully a foot at a hundred yards, for which allowance must be made. The best place to hit a deer, unless he is lying down, and so close as to tempt one to try the head, is just behind the shoulder. If struck fair, he will most likely bound forward ten or twenty yards, and then drop. One that I shot ran fifty yards before it fell, although the lower part of the heart was touched. When this occurs, you may be sure it will never rise again. If, on the contrary, it falls instantaneously, unless shot through the head, neck, or spine, it may very possibly spring up on a sudden, and perhaps escape altogether. If struck too far back, a deer may sometimes run for half a day, and the wound has even been known to heal up, but is more likely to prove fatal the next day. When a deer is discovered lying down, in such a situation that he might dip out of sight the moment he rises, and only his horns are visible, the sportsman should advance with extreme caution until the deer hears him, when he will most likely slowly raise and turn his head before springing up. Now is the time to shoot him between the eye and the ear.

The most propitious day for deer-stalking is a cloudy one with blinks of sunshine—exactly such as you would choose for fishing. When the sky is cloudless, and the sun very dazzling, the herd are apt to see you at a great distance, and take alarm. High and changing wind is always very bad, as it keeps them moving about in a wild and uneasy state. In such weather it is better, if possible, to wait till it settles a little, and take advantage of the first calm. If the breeze be light, they will not move much, but a strong steady wind lasting for some days will always make the deer change their ground, by facing it often for miles. Mist is the worst of all, as the deer are pretty sure to see *you* before *you* see *them*. Always advance on deer from above, as they are much less apt to look up than down a hill. If possible, have the sun at *your back* and in *their face*. With this advantage you may even venture to approach them from below. (Birds, on the contrary, always look up, and it is best to stalk *them* from lower ground.) If it is a quiet shot, and the sun is at your back, wait for a clear blink[1] before making your near approach. Of course every one knows that it is out of the question, *under any circumstances*, to attempt advancing on deer unless the wind be favourable; so all other directions are subject to this.

In corries and hollows it is quite impossible to know how the wind will blow upon a particular point, *unless you have marked every change of wind upon every point of the corrie.*

In high wind, deer are always difficult to drive. Should they make a *pause*, they will in all likelihood turn in the face of a hundred men, and not suffer themselves to be driven farther. As the wind becomes stronger the higher you ascend, the deer on the tops of the hills are most difficult to drive. The lowest ground is always the best for *driving* on a windy day.

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[1] Before fishing a sure salmon-cast, do just the reverse. *If possible* wait for an obscuring cloud.

In south and west wind the deer are far more easily stalked, as the colder and sharper north and east keeps them always moving and beating against it. When fired at, they will go double the distance with an east or north wind.

Deer will go far more readily to the high passes in the morning, and to the low passes in the evening; so this ought always to be attended to.

Never stalk *between* two herds, if it can be helped; this is always considered bad stalking.

Ox-deer, or "heaviers," as the foresters call them (most likely a corruption from the French *hiver*), are wilder than either hart or hind. They often take post upon a height that affords a look-out all round, which makes them very difficult to stalk. Although not so good when December is past, still they are in season all the winter; hence their French designation. Yeld-hinds are also fit for the table till the end of January. The latter are easily distinguished by an experienced forester by their light colour. The ears of the "heaviers" are always cropped, that they may at once be known from the hinds. This deformity makes their hornless heads look perfectly hideous. When stags grow very old, their horns go back, just like a tree going to decay. Sometimes a stag, neither a rig nor a heavier, is hornless, and even "takes the rut."

The best time for a quiet stalking shot is either early in the morning or late in the evening, as the deer are not so much on the alert, and are busy feeding. It is at these times also that they are apt to come down from the high to the low ground.

Some forests are so crowded with hinds and calves that stalking between deer is often unavoidable: this is the most difficult of all stalks. You have to keep a look-out upon the deer on each side, as well as those in the middle, which you are advancing on. Should those on either side catch sight of the sportsman, or get his wind, he may still have his shot, *if* *there is any cover in front,* by *running* forward under shelter of it. Sometimes when the deer on both sides have taken the alarm, even should the ground be bare, those in the middle will stand staring, trying to discover what had frightened the others. Under these circumstances, whenever the sportsman sees the deer on either side begin to move, his only chance of a shot is to *run on;* and perhaps the attention of the centre ones may be so fixed on their companions as to allow him to get within range. When the wind is *fair,* the best plan is to have *good patience* until the deer feed up, without attempting to stalk between them. When you have a side wind, however, it is very difficult to manage, especially with a train of men and dogs, to all of whom the stalker must give his signal at once, perhaps with only twenty yards of ground to come and go upon.

When stalking a herd, or between deer, *down-hill,* the best way is to slide upon the back, with your feet foremost. This can be done by leaning upon the elbows, and using the heels of the shoes to draw on the body. The knees will thus be prevented from rising too high. Should you attempt to crawl down head foremost, the back will often be two feet higher than the head, and the stalker never be aware of it. In sliding down the hill, both stalker and sportsman must have their eye upon the deer; and, if they raise their heads, must keep the exact position they were in when the deer looked up. It is very bad generalship, either with deer or wild fowl, to clap down quickly, as they at once see this manœuvre. Instead of doing so, remain steady as a rock, until the deer begin to feed again, or look in a different direction. Should they suspect you, and thus render it necessary to move out of sight, withdraw yourself *inch by inch,* so as to prevent their seeing the *least motion.* In stalking up-hill, you must crawl sometimes upon hand and knee, occasionally flat upon your face when the deer come more prominently into view. As they always look down hill, greater caution is required than when stalking from above. Should two good stalkers be noticed by deer, one ought always to remain where they were first perceived, the other advancing alone. If the deer are in sight and not far off, a knowing forester often restrains the eagerness of the novice by telling him to "coont the grass as they go along"; that is, to count the deer as they raise their heads for a moment when feeding up. This, by ensuring a very slow advance, doubles the chances of their escaping the notice of the deer, and keeps the young stalker more cool. The forester all the time has his eye on the leading deer. When selecting your hart, raise the rifle most leisurely to the shoulder. If brought up in a hurry, or in the same way that a quick shot takes aim with his fowling-piece, you are almost certain to miss.

A good forester generally becomes very nervous in the long-run, from the bungling of some gentlemen and the ill-temper of others, together with his constant anxiety to procure them fair chances.

The quick sight of a skilful forester in first discovering deer will appear miraculous to a stranger to the sport, and, unless quite bewildered, he cannot fail to admire the generalship which follows. The whole ground is as perfectly known to his guide as his own pleasure-grounds to himself. Every hollow, every knoll is taken advantage of; every shifting turn of the wind, up the one or round the other, is surely predicted, until, to his own utter amazement, the panting Sassenach or Lowlander is told that he is within fair rifle-distance of a bevy of noble harts.

After deer have been stalked and shot at, they become much wilder; the best sport at the old harts is therefore obtained at the beginning of the season. They generally keep together, and when their stately mien and branching antlers are seen in the distance, the sight is enough to inspirit the most apathetic; but when he is told to cock his double-barrelled rifle for a shot, I could well excuse a novice for being scarcely able to obey. When there are hinds in the herd, they often present themselves between you and the unsuspecting harts; but even should they be at a distance, great caution is necessary, as, if one hind gets a glimpse of the crouching enemy, the whole herd, stags and all, are sure to scamper away, amidst the bitter execrations of the forester upon its hornless head.

The next best time for a shot at a fine old stag, after they have become wild, is about the beginning of October, when each lot of hinds is sure to contain a good hart. The chances then may often not be so good, but from the stags being dispersed, there are more of them. If deer are feeding forward, it requires very nice calculation, when at a distance, to know the point they will arrive at by the time you have neared them, especially as a shower of rain or a gust of wind will quicken their motions. But if the stalker is not far from the herd, which is feeding up to his place of concealment, with a favourable wind, he should not grudge waiting; for, by sending round drivers to windward of the deer, they are often apt to turn and face them. I cannot say that driving, under any circumstance, gives half the pleasure that stalking does; for my own part, I would rather kill one stalked hart than several driven. Driving, however, upon a large scale has a most imposing effect; and although it cannot be otherwise than injurious to a forest, yet the exhilarating nature of the whole proceedings, in which so many friends may join, often makes the proprietor overlook the consternation and panic it creates among the wild and timid herd. Some part of the forest is selected to which the deer are to be driven; a great number of hill-men and shepherds, who thoroughly understand what they are about, are then sent to the farthest extremity to bring all the deer they can collect to this spot: the passes, of course, being well known, are occupied by the sportsmen with their rifles. The drivers, sometimes hallooing and sometimes giving their wind, gradually contract their circle; the deer are huddled together, and, finding the only clear ground in the direction of the rifles, slowly and cautiously take their doomed way. There is often great difficulty in driving them, as they are always obliged to go with the wind, which their natural instinct of self-preservation makes them very unwilling to do; and if they possibly can, they always face it. When the herd come within distance of the rifles, great mischief often ensues; the nervous and indifferent shot firing into the centre of the living mass, while even the experienced deer-stalker, in singling out the stag-royal, may sometimes wound a couple of hinds beyond him.

So much for driving on grand occasions, which gives the shooter a tolerably snug sinecure until the game comes up to his hand. But when it is practised in a small way, there is no sport which more calls into play his pluck and endurance of fatigue. He first climbs to the ridge of the hill, where he is at once seen by the hawk-eyed driver who has taken his station near the foot or on the opposite brow, and has marked with his glass every herd at feed or rest on the face below. As soon as he has selected one, he attempts to drive it up the hill, towards the sportsman, either by hallooing or showing himself; at the same time giving warning by the manner of his halloo which way they are likely to take. The sportsman must be thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, or have some person with him who is; and, running from one "snib" to another, in obedience to the signal below, catch sight of the horns of the herd, as with serpentine ascent they wind their wary way. From the zigzag manner in which they often come up, it is very difficult to make sure which pass will be the favoured one, and I have been within a few hundred yards of the antlers when the prolonged shout from below has warned me that I had an almost perpendicular shoulder of the hill to breast at my utmost speed before I could hope to obtain the much-desired shot. If the wind is at all high, so determined are the deer to face it, that, unless there are a great number of drivers, one herd after another may take the wrong direction; but, if the day is favourable with only a light breeze, a knowing driver or two will generally manage to send them up to the rifle. When the deer have selected their pass, should you be within fair distance, with both barrels cocked, beware of making the slightest motion, *especially of the head*, until you mean to fire. Even when perfectly in view, if you lie flat and do not move, the herd are almost sure to pass. One or two hinds generally take the lead. The fine old harts, if there are any in the herd, often come next; but sometimes, if very fat and lazy, they lag in the rear. When the first few hinds have fairly passed, the rest are sure to follow, until their line is broken, and their motions are quickened, by a double volley from the rifle.

When stalking (September 1840) in Glenartney forest, by the kind permission of the noble owner, I had as fine a chance as man could wish spoiled by the scarcely audible whimper of a dog. I was placed in a most advantageous spot, within near distance of the pass. Presently an old hind came picking her stately steps, like a lady of the old school ushering her company to the dining-room. Next her came a careless three-year-old hart, looking very anxious to get forward, and perfectly regardless of danger. All now was safe; I felt sure of my shot,—when, horror of horrors! a slight whimper was heard. The old hind listened, halted, and then turned short round upon the young hart, who instantly followed her example, and the whole herd ran helter-skelter down the hill. The unfortunate sound proceeded from one of the forester's two collies, the only dogs Lord Willoughby allows in the forest: they are kept for the purpose of bringing to bay any deer badly wounded, and are never slipped upon other occasions. The marplot above alluded to was an old dog, and very good for the purpose; he had winded without seeing the deer—hence his mistake.

Glenartney is a beautiful little forest, walled round by fine green hills; but the deer being too numerous for its extent, are rather small. It also stands high, and is not so well sheltered as might be desired—on which account the deer, when the winter storm sets in severely, although fed to the full, cannot remain to eat their food, and are obliged to seek the shelter of the woods for many miles round, far beyond their bounds. At night they wander to the turnip-fields for sustenance, where numbers are shot by poachers, who watch the gates and openings into the fields. One man boasted to me that he had in that manner killed six during one storm, with a common fowling-piece loaded with ball. The turnip-field where he performed this feat was more than twelve miles from the forest.

Perhaps as fine deer as any in the kingdom are those of the Black Mount. The cup[1] on the top of the horns of many, according to Highland phrase, would hold a gill of whisky; and yet there are heads now preserved in Taymouth Castle which show that their forefathers, though fewer in number, were even greater than they. The Black Mount is twenty-one miles long by twelve broad; and the Marquis of Breadalbane, notwithstanding his numerous engagements in public life, has not neglected this noble appanage of a Highland proprietor. No expense or trouble is spared which can contribute to the winter subsistence of the deer, or protect them from poachers. Patches of different kinds of food are sown in the valleys, and left uncut, to which they flock during the severity of winter. The forest has plenty of green summer food, and abundance of long heather, which affords shelter in cold weather, and is greedily eaten in the snowstorm, when hardly any other food can be reached. I shot the subject of the woodcut there about the beginning of October 1840, when the forest was in all its glory, and nothing but sounds of rivalry and defiance were heard in every quarter. The head is not by any means the largest size, but may be taken as a fair average

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[1] The three top prongs of the horn, growing out together, form a cup. There is no cup at all except in the finest and oldest stags.

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Head of Hart.

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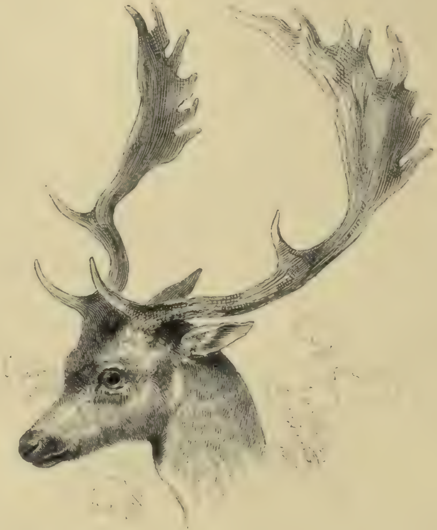

Head of Fallow Deer.

specimen. The fallow-deer's head was from life, one of the finest I ever saw.

The day I shot the red-deer was perhaps the most unpropitious for stalking which could possibly have been chosen. In the morning, the mist was rolling lazily along the sides of the mountains in dense masses, and it was evident there would be rain before the close of the day. It was enough to damp the heart of the most ardent deer-stalker, but I determined (having little time to spare) to abide by the forester's opinion. His answer was, that "we would just do our best; but if we were unsuccessful to-day, I must e'en wait for to-morrow." With this determination we started for the forest, followed by an under-keeper, with one of Lord Breadalbane's fine deer-hounds led in a leash. A slight breeze at first sprang up, and partially cleared away the mist from some of the lower hills. The quick eye of Robertson immediately discovered a deer lying down upon the ridge of one of them. His glass was instantly fixed. "There, sir, if you could manage that fellow, you would have one of the finest harts in the forest." "Well, suppose we go round by the back of the hill, and come down that hollow, we should be within fair distance from the rock." "If he'll only lie still, and give us time enough." This, however, the stag had determined not to do; for when we came to the hollow, he had risen from his rocky couch, and was immediately detected by Robertson, quietly taking his breakfast, among his hinds, a considerable way below. The place was so open all round that it was impossible to get near him, and the mist soon afterwards came on so thick that we only knew that the deer were all round us by their incessant bellowing. The forester looked much disconcerted; for, in addition to the mist, a drizzling rain began to descend. We sat down behind a hillock, and I desired the under-keeper to produce the provision-basket. "If there was only a breeze!" says Robertson; "and I do believe it's comin', for the draps o' rain are much heavier." And so it proved, for the mist again partially cleared. We hastened to take advantage of the change; and Robertson, ten yards in advance, mounting every knoll, and searching every hollow with an eye that seemed to penetrate the very mist, suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and signalled us to do the same. A roar like that of a bull presently let us know the cause; and on a little amphitheatre about five hundred yards off, his profile in full relief, stood as noble a stag as ever "tossed his beamed frontlet to the sky." There he was, like knight of old, every now and then sounding his trumpet of defiance, and courting the battle and the strife. Nor did he challenge in vain, for while we were admiring his majestic attitude, another champion rushed upon him, and a fierce encounter followed. We could distinctly hear the crashing of their horns, as they alternately drove each other to the extremity of the lists. "I wish the ball was through the heart o' one o' ye!" muttered the underkeeper. His wishes were soon to be realised; for the younger knight, who seemed to have the advantage in courage and activity, at last fairly drove his adversary over the knoll and disappeared after him. Robertson now rushed forward, signing to me to follow, and peeping cautiously over the scene of contest, slunk back again, and crawled on hand and knee up a hollow to a hillock immediately beyond—I following his example. When we had gained this point, he took another wary survey, and whispered that the hinds were on the other side of the knoll, within thirty yards. It was now a nervous time, but I could not help admiring the coolness of the forester. Without the least appearance of flurry, he had both eyes and ears open, and gave his directions with distinctness and precision. "That will do; there goes a hind, the whole will follow. Place your rifle on that stone, you'll get a famous chance about eighty yards."—"He'll come at last," he again whispered, as hind after hind slowly passed in review, when a roar was heard immediately below us. "As sure as I'm leevin', he's comin' on the very tap o' us. Hold the rifle this way, sir, and shoot him between the horns the moment his head comes ower the knowe." I had scarcely altered my position, when head, horns, and all, appeared in full view. Seeing us in a moment, he was out of sight at a bound, but, taking a direction round the base of the hillock, presented his broadside a beautiful cross-shot. I had plenty of time for deliberate aim, and the Red Knight of the Wilds lay low and bleeding.

It was now nearly four o'clock, and the forester had some doubts whether we could get him to Inveroran that night; but as I was anxious to start early in the morning, we despatched the follower for a cart, and with great difficulty dragged the stag by the horns down the hill to the road. Notwithstanding the weather, I had been delighted with my expedition, and only regretted having killed the younger and victorious champion instead of his more bulky rival. During our walk to the inn, I had many anecdotes of former bloody deeds in the forest from Robertson, and not a few where the balls had flown scathless. One, in particular, amused me. The Marquis, accompanied by two friends—one of them, I should imagine, more famous for his scientific than sporting qualifications—was stalking some very fine harts. When within rifle-distance, his lordship and one of his friends were crawling over a knoll, in order to select the best of the lot. "What are they about up there?" said the *virtuoso*. "*There* are the deer." Bang! bang! Off went the harts in a twinkling, wishing, I have no doubt, that they had always such fair warning when danger was near.

We passed, during the day, several forest-baths, in full use—*i.e.*, moss-holes where the stags plunge up to the neck and roll about to cool themselves, in summer and autumn. When they come out again, black as pitch, they look like the evil genii of the mountain. In former times poachers used to fasten spears with the points upward in these places, and when the stag threw himself into the hole, he was impaled.

Lord Breadalbane has a very fine kennel of dogs exclusively for bringing the wounded deer to bay. They are for the most part a breed between the fox-hound and greyhound, but some are between the deer-hound and fox-hound. The former are reckoned the best winded. The forester is justly proud of these dogs, mentioning that some of them, when chasing a cold (unwounded) hart with hinds, were so knowing that, should the hart give them the slip at a burn, and run down it, they would stop their pursuit of the hinds, recover his track, and hold him at bay all night should no one come to their relief. The cunning of the old forest-rangers is also remarkable. Once, when some young dogs were being entered at the two-year-old harts, a stag-royal presented himself, but, seeing he was not the immediate object of pursuit, he witnessed the whole chase from the shelter of a plantation; and when the foresters returned they again started him, close to where he was first put up, when he dashed into the thicket of the wood. There was a tame one kept at one of the shooting-lodges which attacked every one but the foresters, and at last was removed to the park at Taymouth. This fellow became so savage and expert with his antlers, that he killed, I have been told, two horses, and no one dared to pass his haunt unless he knew them.

The finest red-deer head I ever saw was that of a park-deer killed by a stab in the flank from another in the Duke of Athole's park at Blair. Of course high feeding was the cause of his immense horns. Such a head is never met with in a wild state. I have now a five-year-old in my brother's park at Rossdhu, and mean to try whether good keep will have the like effect upon *his* antlers. He is very savage; no one dares to go near him without a dog. The Athole deer was fourteen years old.

DEER-DRIVING IN MULL.

"Hunts he Bentalla's nimble deer?"

Deer of the woods, although often large and heavy, are seldom gifted with what foresters call "a good head." The cover of trees is unfavourable to that branching development of the horns which a life on the open hills seems more fitted to foster. As "heath-covered Mull" is entirely grazed by sheep, its deer feed chiefly in the tangled woods and copses, and are loath to show themselves on the bare hill, where they may be chased by a collie dog or "potted" by its master's "swan post," with no witnesses to the murder but the "wild flock," the eagle, or the raven.

I was tenant of two good deer-drives in Mull, distant about ten miles from each other—Bentalla, the faithless "Lord of the Isles" hunting-ground, rising between. The Scalastal range on the "Sound" contained two large woods. One of them, however, called Garmony, had been lately cut, and was next to useless. But the Scalastal wood, when the wind was in the right direction, generally harboured some old deer. To keep all quiet, I also rented Scalastal farm and farmhouse, turning my shepherds into game-preservers, and training their sheep-dogs to run the deer.

Glenforsa, the other shooting-quarter, was situated on the opposite side of the island. In addition to some smaller patches, there were the fine hillside coverts of Garrochree and Torlochan—the former as wild a jungle as even this rugged island could grow. When either of these shootings was driven, especially if the deer were much frightened and the wind favourable, they were apt to cross Bentalla to the other. So, after a hunt at Scalastal, we were not unlikely to find the same deer next day at Glenforsa, and *vice versâ.*

Like many tenants of deer, we were limited on both shootings. Three harts and two hinds was the Glenforsa allowance. A like number of hinds on Scalastal, but they were not so strict about the harts. These restrictions seldom annoy the man who kills his full complement, but they are most disgusting to a party who, at the close of a season, are far below the figure it was thus plainly intimated they were *expected* to slay. My predecessor, although assisted by his keeper and other guns, did not kill one deer among them the whole season. I also knew a party in the north, limited to seventy-five harts, end the season with fifteen, and in the shooting of this small lot they were aided by the resident foresters.

The first year of my Glenforsa lease I had only a few days at its deer. Our first stag was killed by my son when I was in England. I had charged him not to disturb the Glenforsa deer until my return, and he had kept strictly to small game at Scalastal. Two days before I was expected in Mull he drove over to Glenforsa House, with my Scalastal farm overseer, to prepare for our hunt. On the low ground along the banks of Loch-na-Gaul, with the river Knock flowing through it, is a detached strip of plantation much liked by deer, and, if undisturbed, seldom without them. When moved they have three escapes from this wood. When they break at the south corner and make for Garrochree, two of these escapes are guarded by the Knock pass. But should they seek safety in Torlochan wood, they slip out from the middle of the plantation, running east over a bare field, at the top of which, under cover of a drain, is placed the rifle. The Knock pass is far the most certain, not only as commanding two escapes, but also from being more used by the deer.

On the second afternoon, my son, having completed his arrangements, agreed with the manager that, as the deer would be nearly certain to break cover at the Knock pass, there could be no harm in giving this patch an afternoon trial. Of the two chances commanded by the Knock pass, one is exactly 120 yards, the other about 30. It is impossible to equalise the distances without sacrificing one of the chances.

Yarrow's shrill yelp in the plantation soon warned my son that the manager had found deer. A large stag broke on the lower side of the river, came softly round the knolls, and made for the 120-yards pass. Here he had to cross the water, but seemed in no hurry to wet his feet. The collie had not yet left the wood, and the hart listened and watched to see when he would leave it. All this time, the deer being in a slanting posture, my son refrained from firing, well aware that the moment the hart attempted to ford he must present a fair broadside. Black Yarrow now flitted from the covert, and the stag cautiously waded into the stream. Crack goes the rifle, down came the deer on his knees—recovered, and began to hobble across the current. A shot from the second barrel, and he toppled over in mid-stream.

The first act after killing a deer is to examine where the ball has hit him. This time there were two marks through the brisket, on the opposite side to the shooter, but only one on the near side; it was therefore apparent that both balls had entered at the same hole. Considering the distance, this was therefore a beautiful right-and-left rifle-shot. The weight of this deer was 18 stone, and he had a very good head for Mull. I was much pleased with this auspicious start; the more so as the manager saw more deer in the wood, which he had refrained from disturbing.

Dogs thoroughly trained to drive deer-coverts, even when running a hot scent, should be taught immediately to quit it, and return to their master at his whistle. The reason is obvious. When the deer are through the passes, further pursuit by a dog only tires *him* and scares the deer farther away. As soon, therefore, as the quarry before them are past the rifles, the dogs should be called back into the covert to find a fresh track. Often a stray hart or hind turns back by facing the drivers, and remains quietly hid until the wood is searched a second time. An old Mull collie, which once aided our drive, was so knowing, that of his own accord he returned to his master whenever the deer had escaped the shooters. This sagacious creature knew every ambush guarding the wood, and as soon as the deer were out of danger, quite comprehended that it was useless to follow where there were no rifles to kill.

Our cover pack consisted of two pure-bred Mull collies, and a mongrel sheep-dog, which looked like a cross between the old Scotch cur and a jackal. The island pair were *mis*-named Trim and Yarrow by their Tweedside master (my farm-grieve), but the nondescript was more aptly styled the "Ugly Buck." He was a cross-grained, eccentric, unsociable, surly brute—had to have his teeth broken for biting the sheep—would follow or obey no one but his shepherd-master, and when fairly "blooded" at deer, considered himself discharged from the meaner duties of sheep. Although Trim and Yarrow had good noses, and stuck well to their track, yet somehow I always felt most certain of a shot when the covert rang with the wolf-like howl of the Ugly Buck.

The day after my landing in Mull was pouring rain, but the following brightened up again. Scarcely expecting above one chance, I only put four bullets in my pocket, and took a single-barrel seal-rifle, which fitted me exactly.

The manager, his two Mull shepherds, and their three dogs, were sent to the far end of the Knock plantation, while I guarded the Knock pass, and my son watched the other escape to Torlochan wood. The dogs had hardly been thrown into covert when they opened full cry. I distinctly heard the hunt begin at the north end, and gradually near the south of the plantation. Soon two hinds broke below the river, but instead of making for the ford of the Knock, and giving me the 120-yard chance, they kept the open shore of Loch-na-Gaul, and, *contrary to all precedent,* took refuge on the hills of Knock.

I was testily watching their wilful course, when I heard a step approaching on the *near* side of the river. In a moment I knew it to be a deer's. A dip in the ground concealed the tramper until a pair of horns rose about 30 yards from my hiding. A fairer chance there could not be. He crossed at a trot, and I shot him through the heart. My son from his pass had noted this hart the moment he quitted the wood—had marked him confidingly choose his way straight for my hiding-place—was well aware that I could not see him until he came slap upon me—and, to crown all, perceived my attention fixed on the hinds. The thrilling suspense did not cease until he saw me present my rifle. This deer weighed 15 stone, but had a poor head.

The overseer assured us there were two more hinds in the wood, which had "turned back." To give my son *his* turn, we exchanged passes, but fortune again favoured me: the hinds broke at the wood-side for Torlochan, came up the field, and cantered past me at about 60 yards. I rolled over the largest, and if my rifle had been a double-barrel, I had an easier chance at her companion.

We now had to choose our stances for a beat of the large hill-wood of Torlochan. Again the most likely pass was awarded to my son, while I chose mine by the side of a detached rock called the "Rock" pass. This extensive covert requires to be searched with great care and labour. I heard the shouts of the men—now up the hill, now down, then across—until I was quite tired out; not a deer seemed to be in the wood. All of a sudden our pack struck up a jarring chorus. At first the chase bore for my son's ambush, but passing it out of range made for mine. A hind soon showed herself about 100 yards off. I used my rock for a rest and fired; the deer staggered, then slowly walked towards me. When within 40 yards she halted—a lovely chance. Of course I began to load the single barrel. She listened for a moment, then slunk beyond the adjoining heights. Taking a circuit for the wind, I came round them, and was expecting every instant to come upon the wounded deer, when a fresh pair of hinds turned up at long range on the open heath. Putting up the 200-yard sight, I fired the last of my balls! I saw it miss the deer and strike the hill about a foot before them. After loading with powder, I put my hand into my pocket for the bullet!! Here was a fix—for within 100 yards of where I threw away my last ball stood the stricken hind. She allowed me to walk within the fairest range, then limped down the hill, taking refuge in the thickets of Garrochree. It was more than an hour ere I could collect my men and dogs, but by that time the scent had cooled, not even the Ugly Buck deigning to notice it. We searched till dusk, by which time I had come to the conclusion that it is less troublesome to take too many bullets than too few.

THE GARROCHREE STAG.

He was a lonely one, caring nothing for company, large, intensely cunning, and carrying a royal head. From his partiality to the impervious whins of Garrochree he had gained his title. He never willingly left his fastness, except when the flies forced him, returning to it whenever the July sun had abated its fierceness. When hunted he ran a ring round and round the thickest underwood, avoiding every open, and confounding the dogs by the labyrinth of his traces. I have known him dodge about in this manner for half a day, and yet never be once seen by either sportsmen or beaters. The well-known "catch a weasel asleep" might well have been applied to him;

and yet this big weasel *had* been caught napping, but for breaking the proverb had nearly paid the forfeit of his life.

A former tenant of Glenforsa had an eight-barrelled rifle with which he used to astonish the Mull natives by breaking bottles at fabulous distances; and no doubt he was a crack rifleman—*at the target.* One calm summer day, soon after his taking possession, a woodcutter, in passing through Garrochree wood, spied a pair of antlers peering out above the low whins. Shrewdly suspecting the owner of the horns could not be far off, the man of the axe went to Glenforsa House and apprised Mr —— of his discovery. The eight barrels were soon shotted, and the rifleman, guided by the woodman and accompanied by the farm-grieve (who told me the above particulars), was soon close to the stag's lair. The rifleman was perfectly concealed; and to increase his chances of success the deer had risen, and, all unconscious of peril, was cropping the rich grass within point-blank range. The eight barrels were levelled: barrel 1, the stag started; barrel 2, looked about to see where the noise came from; barrel 3, walked a few paces, and then listened; barrel 4, shook his head and looked towards the enemy; barrel 5, the stag, like a determined duellist, having accepted five shots, thought he had done enough to prove his courage, and resolved never to stand fire again.

Our men and dogs having been quite done up by severe work, we gave them a day's rest to enable them to do justice to our last deer-hunt of the season. But the wind was "wrong" for our final day. No deer consequently in Knock wood—not a track in Torlochan—the evening fast closing in, and our only hope the rugged jungle of Garrochree. To humour the wind and command a view of the hunt, we occupied the high passes; but, after the morning failures, had about as much hope of moving a rhinoceros as a red-deer. I was listlessly looking at the men taking ground ere they threw the dogs into the thicket, when my eye picked up a deer slowly threading a devious course, but evidently making for the open hill. With keen interest I watched its many wayward angles and wheels, when, suddenly halting and casting a glance at the baffled dogs and men, it stalked into the bare ground—a majestic royal stag. Choosing the pass immediately beyond those where we were concealed, and bringing his noble profile into full relief against the evening sky he disappeared leisurely over the ridge of the hill. This was the first time I saw "the Garrochree stag," but it was not the last.

Our second Mull season began as prosperously as the first, but we had the advantage of another gun, both my sons having got a fortnight's leave from their regiments. Before settling to regular work, the "green hand" had the honour of drawing first blood, by killing a hart of 14 stone, at a scrambling afternoon beat of Torlochan wood. It was a snap in the thick of the trees with an S.S.G. cartridge, and the only shot fired that day.

Our plan was to give several days first to Scalastal, reserving the last week for Glenforsa, as a *bonne bouche.*

It was the first week of October, and the stags had given notice by some trumpet-blasts that the season of warfare was at hand. The Scalastal overseer told us they came down after nightfall to feed on a field of turnips close to the farmhouse, and one of them for the last few nights had been "roaring like mad." I was seated by a good fire reading, when the man popped in his head to say that the stag was "at it again," and urging me to come out and hear his defiant music. The sudden change from the bright and comfortable glare of the fire and candles to the solemn gloom of a moonless and starless night, whose silence was only broken by occasional bellowings of the stag, suggested to one's fancy an Indian prairie or African desert rather than one of our own Hebrides covered with its brown heath and shaggy wood.

When the grieve thought my mettle was up for a shot, he slyly observed that a fowling-piece loaded with buck-shot *might* hit them, even in so dark a night, and felt confident that he could grope his way to the gap in the wall where the deer entered to "*spoil* (!) the neeps," and by which they also retreated when satisfied. To prevent them getting our wind, we had to make a considerable circuit through rough hill ground, to clamber over a high fence, and, worst of all, to cross Scalastal brook. Had I not been confident the man could find his way blindfold, I should certainly have declined the whole thing. No sooner had we quitted the outer door into the black still darkness, than I felt powerless as a child. The overseer, however, was alert enough. First tracing a sheep-path to guide him to the fence, which he followed down until he discovered the rude steps he sought, then listening for the brook, he rather anxiously whispered, "If we were but through the burn," and led the way. The burn was full of large stones, deep linns, and swollen by recent rain; but by finding the ford we managed to scramble through, about knee-deep. Guided by the bellowing of the deer (for we now distinguished more than one roaring), the gap in the turnip-field was easily found, and I was quickly squatted, so as to have the quarry between me and the sky when steadying themselves for the leap down from the field into the moor. My sons and the shepherds had to move them from the lower end, where they were now feeding, and when they reached the gap they would be about ten paces from my ambush. A few minutes of suspense, and we heard the rush of the deer bounding in our direction. They halted with only the wall between us. Every moment I expected a dark figure on the sky-line, but they seemed bent on trying our patience. Only when the drivers were close on them did they deign to move; and then, instead of their convenient egress, wandered alongside the wall and made an uncomfortable exit at the burn! The wind being all right, it was impossible they could either have smelt, seen, or heard us, and we could only account for the mishap by that caprice common to all living creatures as well as deer. When groping our way home, we consoled ourselves by the hope that we should certainly find these same harts next day in Scalastal wood.

When the wind is north, the south passes of course guard the extensive oak copse of Scalastal. They are four in number, nearly in line. As the wood hangs on a hillside, the passes rise one above the other, and were known to us as the high pass, the middle pass, the low pass, and the lowest pass. Attended by the grieve, to point out the ground, we scaled the hill, directing the shepherds to allow us twenty minutes' law, before throwing the dogs into the low side copse-wood flanked by the burn. I preferred the middle pass (*medio tut.*, &c.), my eldest son the high one (*excelsior*), his brother the highest he could get (!), and the lowest was left to itself and *the deer*.

Both my sons had taken their ground, but the overseer was in the act of pointing out mine, when the lugubrious tones of the Ugly Buck swelled out in the wood close beneath. In an instant a hart burst from the thicket, and ran past at a sling gallop. "Noo, sir," from behind me—certainly a thoughtless hint, which has coaxed many a young sportsman into a dead miss. Fortunately, in this instance, the shooter was old and callous, so he took his time, and the hart fell dead in the heather. "Look oot, sir, for anither." The second warning fully atoned for the first. It was scarcely given when another hart galloped fair across our path, and he also rolled head over heels on the hillside. My favourite "Henry" rifle was loaded again in a twinkling, but no more deer turned out, neither did any try my sons' ground; but we heard from a neighbouring shepherd that a third hart had sneaked out at the *rejected* pass. The two killed were exactly the same weight, 15 stone, and both were shot through the shoulder, galloping, at 70 yards' distance.

The turnip-field was quiet enough to-night, and not a roar heard far or near. Suspecting that "the lowest pass" fugitive would return in the night to Scalastal wood in search of his brethren, we arranged another drive for next morning. At this hunt our posts were the same, except that my second son was now convinced that it is sometimes good policy to choose the lowest place. The dogs soon found a hot track, but the run was long, and the deer stubborn. For nearly two hours they stuck to the scent, threading their nimble quarry round every rugged knoll and through many a tangled thicket. At last, when least expected, and the cry of the dogs at the farthest point of the covert, the object of their pursuit, in the shape of an old hind, quietly stole out of the wood, and stood opposite me, listening—a fine broadside, though rather distant chance. I fired, and struck her hard. She turned again for hiding to the copse, but a shot from the second barrel brought her down. There were no more deer found all day, so the hart had not returned.

Our last Scalastal day was intended for black-game and grouse, and as the cutting of Garmony wood (which had spoilt it for deer) made fine open shooting at black-game, we gave it the first trial. Our bags were fast filling with young black-cocks, and old ones too, before we got to the farther end of the wood, where the moor-ground of Garmony and Fishness begins. Here we meant to range for grouse, but, to our surprise, a deer was watching our motions on this open moor, distant about half a mile. As it was a very small hind, we thought the No. 5, *if near enough*, might possibly add her to the game-list of the day. Leaving my youngest son at the spot where the deer was likely to enter the wood, and sending my eldest round the knolls, to take post a little way above her, I coupled up our brace of setters, making them and the retriever follow me. The attention of the deer was at once fixed on me and my dogs. She never took her eye from us until, having got fairly in her rear, I began to whistle and draw up. As I hoped, she went away at a walk, looking now and then over her shoulder to see if she was pursued. The marksman above had thus ample time to shift his ground, so as to meet her at the nearest point among the heights. She never detected the ambuscade until within 40 yards, when she was saluted by a right and left. Starting off at speed, she made straight for the other gun, but the rough ground soon hid her, until we heard a single shot. Glad that it was not a *double* one, we hurried up to see the sportsman triumphantly seated on his quarry. It was only a yearling, and had been fairly hit by the double shot, some of the pellets we picked out of the hair not having even penetrated the hide. The single shot was only about ten yards off, and killed her on the spot.

Early next morning our " 'bus " was at the door for Glenforsa. This massive equipage had a railed roof strong enough to bear a ton, immovable windows, and a low door at the stern, usually strapped open. We yoked the heaviest of the farm-horses as wheeler, and in the lead an old white Mull " garron " of twenty-five, harnessed with cart-ropes, and ridden by the lightest shepherd as postilion. When the top was loaded with provisions, and the inside filled by sportsmen, dogs, and rifles, with the overseer as state-coachman, we ground slowly but merrily along, to the wonder and amusement of Mull residents.

The wind had not been in "the richt Glenforsa airt" for some days, so of course there were few deer on the ground. Our first hunt was thoroughly unsuccessful. Only one hind in the Knock which bounded past me out of all fair distance for Torlochan wood. I put up the long sight, and missed with both barrels. We were now sure of at least one deer in Torlochan, and, as usual, took post to guard the runs from this wood to Garrochree. The highest Torlochan pass, which I chose, commands a fine view of Garrochree, so I was nearly certain to detect deer leaving either wood. The dogs soon found the hind in Torlochan, and chased her round the wood, when she bolted through an unguarded pass into Garrochree. Trim and Yarrow followed in company, and I was tracing their course, and trying to make out the quarry among the trees, when full before me, and within a short distance of his first escape, stood the Garrochree stag. Well aware that the dogs were not after him, he was complacently watching the hunt, and when he saw his territory fairly invaded, retreated through his customary defile. I looked revengefully at his exit, and hoped to come round him yet. With the exception of these two deer, all our coverts were drawn blank; and after a hard day's work we returned to Glenforsa house—cheered, however, by a change of the wind.

The customary rest-day was given to the pack, which we devoted to the Glenforsa pheasants, killing the round dozen, besides hares and rabbits. As the wind had continued steady, we felt sure of deer next day, and in walking home were concerting the best mode of driving the covers, when the overseer met us with dejected mien. "The Ugly Buck has bolted after his master to Scalastal," says he. "We cheated him a' day that Dugald was here, but the naasty beast fan' us oot and set after him." To supply the place of the truant, we asked a day's driving from the shepherd who owned the old dog already referred to, which was at once cheerfully given.

Maclean and his collie walked up the avenue next morning—just such a study as would have charmed the eye and inspired the pencil of our late unrivalled Wilkie. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, handsome young man, with black curly hair streaming under the blue bonnet, a shepherd's crook in his hand, and that peculiar shamble which proved at once that the roads were his detestation and the hills his delight. His dog, known as the best in Mull, would not have been tolerated among the useless showy creatures that generally take first prizes at dog exhibitions, for it required a thorough sportsman to appreciate his points. Low in size and stiff in gait, his limbs slightly curved, and his hair wiry—at a passing glance most people would have called him ugly; but the broad chest, the round firm foot, the breadth of the head between the ears, and the exceeding intelligence and mildness of the eye, would soon have arrested the attention of a real judge of canine merit to the exclusion of all other fanciful points of useless beauty.

Wishing to take full service out of the man and his dog, we set him to the large rough woods of Torlochan and Garrochree first, reserving the Knock for the evening, if we had time. After giving strict injunctions to the grieve not to allow his dogs to break into Garrochree again, I chose the lowest pass, where the hind eluded us before. The chance is generally a long-running one, but open and broadside. The dogs found at once, and stuck to their game beautifully. Several times the deer came close to my pass, then seemed to lose heart when facing the open, and returned to the shelter of Torlochan. There was a larch plantation close to me, by which deer might have skulked into Garrochree, but it was so near to the cultivated ground that they were afraid to try it. Yet, after several times shirking her " beaten path," the hunted deer bounded down this wood within forty yards of the bush where I lay in wait. The shot was so quick as to be *almost* a snap: she darted forward like the wind. My left barrel was so arrant a snap that I never saw the deer drop. After despatching her with my knife, I found my first ball had passed through her entrails, and the second broken both her hind-legs. Had it not been for this last fortunate chance, she might possibly have escaped for the present, although certain to die soon after in the woods.

Before disturbing Garrochree, we went by the side of Loch Baa to a small lonely oak copse, where a good hart had harboured all summer. My pass was again the low one, and by lying flat I had the benefit of a fine rest for the rifle. No sooner into covert than the pack opened, and in a short time I spied the stag's horns coming out of the wood. It was an enviable chance—fair, open, slow, and broadside. It *would* have been a bungle had he not dropt to shot. Weight, 17 stone, and a very good head.

Now for the Garrochree stag! "We know his tricks—only let him try them," was the boast of our party when marching to rouse the doomed monster. His retreat was securely barred by my eldest son, while I took my former vantage-ground to give notice of his approach by a wave of my cap. He was at home as usual, but no persuasion could force him from his fastness. In vain Maclean's dog found him several times hid in an impenetrable thicket: he always ran the ring of the jungle, and then clapping suddenly down, was lost until he was rested for another race. I never ceased watching the old collie, and never saw such endurance and pluck shown by any dog that ran the foot. Sticking to his track like a bloodhound, not once overrunning it, or slacking his pace, facing briers and whins that appalled the other dogs, and all the time attending to the slightest signal of his master, he proved himself nobly possessed of intelligence, perseverance, and self-command, qualities which have always been the making of great *men!*

Returning home jaded enough by a hard day, yet pleased with its success, we were welcomed by the Ugly Buck and his master, just arrived from Scalastal. As we dared not part them again, we despatched the pair in the fishing-coble to bring home the hart—the hind lay within a few hundred yards of the house.

A Scotch mist was a good excuse for declining the hills next morning, and as there were only two more days before the steamboat touched at our island, the dogs would be nicely rested for the concluding hunt. It was a lovely one that last day in Mull—bright, calm, and bracing enough to inspirit a clod. Of course, the first point to prove was whether *the* stag would try skulking tactics. A short cut led me to the look-out on the hill; but my son had to go round with the beaters and ascend the high ground from behind, so as to humour the wind and reach his ambush unobserved. I saw him breasting the hill and nearly on its crest, when one of the shepherds thoughtlessly called to the dogs. It was a low caution, yet was distinctly heard by me through the thin air, and of course by the wily deer. As the rifleman, however, was now on the hill-top, and rapidly descending to his post, all seemed safe, when at this critical moment, and never suspecting that an enemy was marching parallel and would soon be in possession of the defile, quietly emerged from the thicket the object of our wiles. Scarcely able to restrain my impatience, I yet felt sure that a "haste signal" would put the stag on his guard; but if left to his own devices, he might possibly linger until retreat was death. The marksman, equally unconscious of the magnificent trophy almost within reach of his rifle, stepped briskly on, and was within rifle-shot of the pass when the deer glided carelessly into it. Had he been aware of the position of his victim, even now the stag could not have escaped; but by inadvertently crossing his wind the danger was instantly revealed. Raising his branching front, and snuffing the "tainted gale," he vanished suddenly round the hill, and with him all hope of adding to our list the royal head of the Garrochree stag.

As there were no more deer in Garrochree, the hunt was sent round to the north end of Torlochan to beat up for the south passes, which we had now to guard. My son having chosen the low pass, where the last hind fell, I had simply to face about, and walk a few paces forward to command the high runs. A view of the distant sea, flanked by its noble range of mountains, with the silvery Loch Baa at my feet, had pretty well lulled my vigilance, when a single shot from below roused me from my reverie. The three dogs soon after swept through the low pass full cry, and, skirting the shores of the loch, seemed making for the rough cover of Garrochree. Although nearly a mile above, I saw a small object take the water and strike out for the opposite side. Fixing the telescope, I felt satisfied that the noise had scared a sheep (no unfrequent result) from the low banks into Loch Baa for safety.

It had nearly gained mid-loch when I heard the rapid stroke of oars, and presently the fishing-coble, pulled by the shepherds at their utmost stretch, headed back the swimmer in the direction from which it had started. I now distinctly traced two animals in the water, and their pursuer running to meet them at the salmon-point, where they seemed bent on landing. He fired, and missed the head of one, which wheeled about and swam for another point, but its companion struck ground and fell dead to the second barrel. The boatman quickly took the sportsman on board, and ere the first he fired at could gain the shore he shot her through the head. The pair, an old hind and her calf, were the only deer in Torlochan wood; and the marksman being *now* in no humour to throw away a chance, had hit the hind through the back running, at 130 yards, when she took the water, followed by her calf. The latter was fortunately a male, so we had exactly completed our year's lot of three harts and two hinds.

A CONTRETEMPS.

I shall conclude these wood-driving reminiscences of Mull by a deer-stalking incident at my next shooting-quarter, which, as a "comedy of errors," was quite unique.

Accompanied by a friend and my second son, we were returning from fishing the high pools of the Falloch, when the hill-watcher met us in hot haste with the welcome news that a couple of harts were feeding in a wild corrie of the Arnan, and he did not think they were likely to be disturbed, or quit their ground for some time.

Leaving our friend and the keeper to finish the lower waters of the river, my son and I made short work of exchanging rods for rifles, and were soon at the base of the Arnan hill. The watcher's face grew long, for the deer had shifted, and although we were all right as to the wind, yet a slight movement among any of the numerous sheep feeding all round might instantly put them on their guard.

Peter Robertson, of the "Black Mount," had kindly lent us a very good lurcher for bringing wounded deer to bay, yclept Friday, whose black coat was another source of anxiety. Sending the man forward with a telescope, we squatted down with the lurcher behind a bank, determined to wait patiently till our spy was thoroughly satisfied. In about half an hour he returned, his radiant visage, even before he spoke, showing all was right. The harts, he told us, were resting on a height some way off, but by humouring the ground I soon got a capital view of them. They might be approached from below or from above, but I always like the high stalk best, as deer are so much less apt to look up than down hill. In this instance the watcher was clearly for the low approach, as he feared our deer-hound might scare the sheep, scattered thickly over the heights. Notwithstanding, I decided to risk it, and by *stalking* the sheep and screening the dog among us, we at last got safely beyond them. The harts were now close at hand; so leaving the watcher with Friday on the leash, we were soon at the back of the knoll, where we had seen them lying. I directed my son to keep about eighty yards above me, lest they might have risen, and separated, but not to show himself until I had fired.

On looking through a tuft of heather, I saw the deer on their legs—fine side chances—the largest about 50, and the other fully 100 yards off. I fired a double shot; and my son called down, "You've done for them both." The near one ran a short way and fell dead, but the other, dropping on its knees, rolled over the opposite side of the height, on the crest of which it was standing, and limped down the hill until close to my son, where it halted, staring at him within pistol-range. At this moment a third hart galloped across the face of the corrie, which I mistook for the wounded one, and called to the watcher to slip the dog. There was a beautiful course, Friday turning the deer whenever he tried the steep, but down-hill the hart had the best of it. Expecting soon to be warned by the bay that our fugitive was "at a standstill," we all followed in pursuit; but when poor Friday returned chopfallen and bloodless, our disappointment was extreme. "At any rate, one of them is safe," says the younger sportsman. "I should think so," rejoined the elder, "when I measured his head!" "Measured his head! why, he came to *me*, his leg swinging like a flail, and stood about fifteen paces off. I could almost have knocked him down with the butt of the rifle." "I saw the deer dead enough in the heather; and if the Captain saw anither, there must have been three," put in the watcher. "Well," says the first speaker, "if there is one lying dead, you are sure enough of the wounded one, for he couldn't outrun a man, far less a dog. I only didn't fire because I felt sure I could walk up to him."

Friday had, however, taken us two long *hill* miles from the spot, and fully an hour and a half had passed since the chase began. When we got to the place where the wounded hart stood, he was nowhere to be seen. We sought the hill till evening, but the ground was very rough, and covered with the longest heather, and was also full of deep holes. Next day the search was renewed with additional dogs and men, but without finding any traces of the stricken hart. Since this series of stalking blunders, I have always recommended young deer-stalkers to adopt the Kirkpatricks' motto, "I will mak sicker."

ROE-HUNTING.

Many of the woods that fringe our most romantic lochs and glens abound with the roe; its chief food being the leaves in summer, and the tender tops of the trees in winter. I do not mean to say that it is not also fond of grass or clover, but the other is its most natural choice. So destructive is it to young woods, that many gentlemen give it no quarter on this account. Even trees of considerable growth are not safe from its attacks; the buck sometimes fixing his horns against the stem, walking round and round until the ground is bared, and the bark so injured that the tree dies. The favourite haunts of the roe are those belts of young plantation, surmounted by large pine-forests, common throughout the Highlands: the former supply it with food, and the latter give it shelter.

The pursuit of the roe, if followed in a proper way, affords first-rate sport, and taxes to the full the strength, skill, and energy of the hunter; but this is seldom the case, and the generality of roe-hunts are nothing but blunders from beginning to end. The common way of proceeding is, to place half-a-dozen gentlemen with their guns in the passes, and then, with a host of beaters and dogs, to scour the plantations, always commencing at the windward side, where the roes are sure to be found. I confess I have no great liking for this plan: the plantations are thoroughly disturbed, almost every head of game being driven out of them; and I never saw a

Roebuck cleaning his horns.

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party of this kind succeed much better than when one or two experienced roe-hunters had the whole sport to themselves.[1]

A description of one of these noisy parties will, with a few exceptions, apply to all. We will suppose the sportsmen snugly in their passes, while the beaters and dogs are in full hoot and howl in the wood below: one man allows the roe to slip by unobserved, until it is almost out of reach, then fires his buck-shot, perhaps wounding his game, which the dogs are unable to run down; another never sees it at all; a third shows himself in the pass, and so throws away his chance; and I have even known two instances of our brethren from the south leaving their posts for a time to take a comfortable luncheon—their love of a roe-pasty prevailing over their love of the chase. One of them was only detected by the hounds and roe having run right through his pass during his absence. Although a man should not be so churlish as to refuse joining a party of this kind, yet I could excuse any knowing roe-hunter for anticipating with greater pleasure and hope of success the day when he may take the field alone.

Such a one will always prefer a day with scarcely a breath of air, high wind being destruction to his sport—first, from the difficulty of hearing the hound; and next, from the currents of air which he will be obliged to avoid, lest the roe should wind him. His only companion is a very slow and steady hound. Thoroughly acquainted with all the passes, he places himself in that he considers the best, ready to change his position should the baying of the hound seem to indicate that the roe has taken a different direction. If it escapes at the first burst, he is not at all disconcerted, as his tactics now begin. The roe perhaps stretches away into the large pine-forest, and he sees his good hound slowly and surely threading his way through the thick underwood, and hears him making the welkin ring. Now is the time for our sportsman to display the strength of his lungs and limbs. Aware that the roe, after a fair heat, will probably slacken its speed, with the hound scarcely more than a hundred yards behind, and will course slowly round and round a knot of hillocks, perhaps for half an hour at a time, he will use his utmost efforts to keep within hearing of the bay. Whenever this appears nearly confined to one place, he advances with extreme caution, peering round at every step, with his gun cocked and held ready to fire. The sound seems now at hand—again more distant, as it is obstructed by the intervening hillocks; he conceals himself upon an angle of one of them, near the centre of the knot, to command as good a view both ways as he can. If the hound continues opening near, he watches with the utmost vigilance, almost holding his breath to catch the slightest sound. After waiting some time, should the dog still remain near, he will occasionally shift his position, but always with the same caution.

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[1] The roe is occasionally stalked, and shot with the rifle, and I have heard it alleged that it is thus raised to the dignity of a deer, whereas the common method of buck-shot degrades it to the level of a hare. Having several times tried this experiment, I may safely pronounce it a most wretched burlesque upon deer-stalking. Roes almost always confine themselves to the woods; and although, by peeping round corners and openings in the plantations, you may sometimes get a good rifle-shot, yet you are much more apt to come upon them quite within range of buck-shot, especially if the cover is not very thin, which, when a good haunt of roes, it seldom is. They are thus almost sure to see and hear you, and steal away unperceived; but should you succeed in getting the shot, it is pretty certain to be a running one, and you will stand but a poor chance with a rifle at a roe bounding among thick plantations. The great excitement of deer-stalking consists in seeing your game from a distance without being yourself perceived, which affords ample scope for skill and tact in approaching it.

A novice would scarcely believe the noiseless step with which a roe will often pass, and the scanty covering of brushwood that will screen it from observation. Should it slip by in this manner, you will of course immediately know by the tracking of the hound, which has often made me aware of its almost magical transit. Attention and experience, however, will considerably lessen the roe's chance of escape. Whenever it takes another direction, follow at your best speed, until it again tries the dodging game. Continue the pursuit so long as your hound is stanch, and your own strength holds out, taking advantage of every pass within and around the wood.

Here let me give two cautions—always to dress as near to the colour of the ground and trees as you can, and, when concealed, never to make the least motion: if you do, the roe will at once perceive it and stop short. You will most likely only be made aware of its having done so by the hound coming within forty or fifty yards, and then turning away in another direction. When properly dressed, even should your place of concealment not be very good, the roe will be pretty sure to pass *if you keep perfectly still.* This caution is even more necessary when expecting a hill-fox. Should the roe take a straight course, right out of your beat, you must await its return; which, if it has not been alarmed or shot at, you may pretty confidently expect.

In recommending the above manner of roe-shooting, it must be remembered that I do not say it is easy; but I do say that, when thoroughly understood, it will be attended with much greater success in the long-run, and that the roes will be less disturbed, than when many of the passes are kept by novices in the sport. I once, in Kenmure wood, at the head of Loch Lomond, by this mode killed two in a few hours—one of them a very fine old buck—without harassing any others; while a party of five or six of us, and beaters to correspond, after alarming the whole wood, and firing many shots, only got three yearling fawns in four whole days.

Many gentlemen have a great prejudice against allowing hounds to enter their covers, for fear of driving the roes away, when the blame should rather be laid on their large party, unskilful manœuvring, and long random shots. I have had good proof that roes are not so much afraid of fox-hounds as people suppose. A gentleman of my acquaintance had a newly-planted wood much injured by them: he desired the gamekeeper to hunt them out. So little, however, did this frighten them, that they have been known to return within an hour after the hounds were taken off; nor would they leave the place until one or two had been shot.

Nor is this the only instance which has come within my own notice. On the shooting-ground which I took for a season at Kinnaird, in Perthshire, was a pine wood, with an oak copse at the side: here I frequently saw a fine buck and two does feeding. They were very tame, and I tried in vain to beat them out with the shepherd's dogs. I had not then much knowledge of roe-hunting; but I procured an old hound, and pursued them every day for a week without getting a shot. They were still to be found in their old haunts every morning, although ever so hard hunted the day before. They would take a stretch upon the open moor for an hour, and then return, always keeping together; and it was only by marking a much-used pass that I at length succeeded in getting a very fair right-and-left, killing the buck with one barrel, and one of the does with the other. A stray shot struck the other doe, which happened to be in line, and broke her leg, although I was not aware of it. Two days after, a farmer sent me notice that a wounded roe had been seen in the wood. I again put the hound into the cover, and in a short time the poor creature came limping past, when I shot it, to prevent the dog from putting it to a more cruel death. I do not mention this as claiming any merit, for the shots were open, near, and easy; greater skill might have secured them some time before: but I think a fair inference in proof of my assertion may be drawn from this and other instances of the kind.

When roes haunt a small belt of plantation, it is often impossible to say where they will break cover. The surest plan is to take a pass a little way off, as the roe, wherever it may break, soon falls into a beaten track when leaving one wood for another.

It is a rare thing to take a right-and-left at roe; they slip past so quickly, and generally in small numbers. I have known many old sportsmen who have shot them all their lives, and yet never killed a couple right and left. During my whole shooting life I have only done so five times, and yet few men have slain more roes. Blood-hounds are now coming into vogue, instead of fox-hounds, for running them out of thick coverts. From the truer nose, slower movement, and more deep-toned voice of the blood-hound, he is certainly far better adapted for the purpose. This noble dog is supposed to be the lineal descendant of the old deep-flewed English slot-hound, or talbot; and there is certainly little difference, except in colour. The prevailing hue of the talbot was white; that of the blood-hound is black and tan. All the finer qualities of the talbot have been sacrificed in his degenerate successor—the fox-hound of modern days—to acquire the great desideratum, *speed.*

Never "gralloch"[1] a roe near a favourite pass, *unless you wish it to be forsaken.*

The roe's sagacity in discovering real from apparent danger is remarkable: the crouching shooter with his deadly gun is instantly detected, while the harmless workman may even blast a rock and cause no alarm. This fact I have been assured of by men employed on the Highland road, who had often seen the roes peeping at them from the cliffs above, watching their whole proceedings without any signs of fear.

The roe has no great kindliness for the fallow-deer. It is a curious fact, that there are two large wooded islands in Loch Lomond which the roes constantly frequent, without ever crossing to a third, where deer are kept, though well adapted to their habits. When swimming in and out of these islands, the roes have regular passes as on land; but if a boat be near they will never attempt to cross. An English gentleman once wishing for a couple, a plan of catching them in the water was thought of. For this purpose boats were concealed near the passes, and the roes hunted out of the islands.

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[1] Clean out the inside.

But they were such dexterous swimmers, and doubled so well, that they always escaped, until the thought of fixing a noose to a pole suggested itself, by which simple device they were soon secured. In a short time they became quite domesticated, and would eat from the hand of their keeper.

Another was caught many years ago, which my brothers and I, when boys, begged to be allowed to tame. We used to bring it leaves in great quantities, which it would eat from our hands, always preferring those of the mountain-ash. The confinement, however, did not agree with it; and, although supplied with grass, clover, and everything we could think of, it fell off in condition, and we were obliged to set it free.

The roe has two young ones at a time, the most beautiful little creatures possible. It is curious to see them, when started, bound away with the greatest activity, though no bigger than a cat.

GLENFALLOCH ROES.

"The roe, Captain Waverley, may be hunted at all times alike; for never being in what is called pride of grease, he is also never out of season, though it be a truth that his venison is not equal to that of either the red or fallow deer." Such is the stately Baron of Bradwardine's verdict on roes and their venison. And who would deny the conclusion when arrived at from such premises? If the roe is "never out of season," and "may be hunted at all times," and is never "in pride of grease," I fully agree with the Baron that the vile trash which he calls "venison" is only fit for a dog-kennel. But then the "if"—there's the rub. I dispute his premises *in toto*, and therefore deny his conclusion. The roe may not be hunted at all times alike. The roe *is* out of season the greater part of the year. Roes *are* sometimes in pride of grease, and when shot in this state are superior venison to either red or fallow deer.

I am fully aware that most sportsmen and housekeepers will meet this assertion with a shake of the head; but I am prepared to prove that every season I rented Glenfalloch I shot several roe-deer as fat as good mutton; and in January 1861, the first year of my lease, my son and I killed three bucks within a few days whose kidneys were loaded with fat. Several people came on purpose to satisfy their curiosity as to the condition of those bucks, and all agreed that if they were not "in pride of grease," no deer ever could be.

Some people insist upon larding roe-deer venison with beef or mutton fat, while others assert that the only way to make roe-flesh tolerable is to stew it. When a roe is out of condition, stewing and larding may disguise it as food, just as the French cook, by the help of condiments, made his master eat his old slippers; but people who would so treat a roe-haunch in prime order deserve never to have an opportunity of spoiling one again.

The condition of roes is far more precarious than that of either red or fallow deer. In some seasons very few good ones are killed at all. Some localities, too, seem much more adapted to fatten them than others. During a lease of three years at Glenfalloch, we killed 31 roe-deer, and of that number 12 were in first-rate condition. The last year of a former lease in Aberdeenshire, I killed 19 roes, and my son 5, but the best of these 24 did not equal the worst of the Glenfalloch dozen. What is stranger still, during the year that we killed most fat ones at Glenfalloch, my brother complained that out of a number killed by them, only 20 miles distant, there was not one really good roe.

Why the Glenfalloch roes were fatter than those on any of my other rented shootings I never could discover; but if even there, and *at the height of the season,* good ones were so rare, no wonder that the majority of sportsmen and housekeepers have branded roe-venison with the ill name that has hanged so many dogs. The haunches of all our prime roes are simply roasted, and I never saw any one partake of them who did not say they were the most delicate and delicious of all venison. My brother, who had both red and fallow deer in perfection, decidedly gave the palm to roe—*when in condition.*

From the Baron's other assertion, that "the roe may be hunted at all times alike," I differ more completely than about the quality of its venison. The usual autumn announcements that "—— brought down a couple of stags and a fine roebuck," or "several harts and a couple of roe-deer in fine condition," scarcely need comment. The deer are killed at *their* best time of year, and are, of course, as fat as they can be; while the poor roes are massacred out of season, being simply carrion. Until they exchange the red hair for the mouse-coloured, they are only bags of bones covered by some dark dry flesh, with not a particle of fat. The summer coat begins to change for the winter one in September, being complete in November, before which time no roes should be shot. Red-deer harts, on the contrary, never come into prime order until they are divested of the winter grey, and have assumed the rich red of the sporting season.

When the woods are thick with leaves, it is very difficult to force a roe into open ground at all; but instinct also warns it not to come into view when at its weakest state. Thus, whether for sport or food, the roe should never be hunted except for the short time they are, or ought to be, in their prime; and if this rule is broken, they will equally disappoint the hunter and the gourmand.

Roes shed their horns from the middle of December till January, and are then at their best. They begin to fall off in February; and by the beginning of March they are useless as food till the next roe-hunting season in November.

There are two methods of hunting the roe, the choice of either depending on the extent of the woods and on the nature of the country. In extensive, unbroken, and impervious woods, an old, steady fox-hound is indispensable to force them into open ground and through the passes. Day after day they will dodge about in their favourite fastnesses; but unless the hunter thoroughly understands the sport, and knows every pass and open space of the forest, he will most probably come home each evening without having fired a shot. Should, however, the country be dotted over with small copses and belts of plantation, without one large wood to shelter them, hunting roe with a fox-hound is totally impracticable, and if persevered in, most of the roe-deer will leave the ground altogether. When a good steady hound finds the track of roe, he will stick to it for half a day; and the quarry, well knowing the futility of seeking concealment in the near coverts, makes for some distant retreat, not to return perhaps for weeks. For such small woods many people prefer beaters; but I have always observed that beaters, after the first few drives, shy the roes more, and make them more wary and cunning than dogs do. I have also this objection to a noisy troop, that it is a lazy and stupid way of killing game.

The Glenfalloch coverts were chiefly of oak copse, with a sprinkling of larch and fir. None of them being of great extent, and all tolerably open, pleasanter roe-shooting could not be had. There were no other guns than my son's and my own, and no other beating aid than one keeper and two retriever dogs. The retrievers were under perfect command, and never were permitted to persecute the roes needlessly; so the latter soon became accustomed to them, and, feeling confident of easily eluding their pursuers even in these small coverts, scarcely ever took the trouble to quit them.

In a larch plantation, close to our doors, a couple of does lived all summer. The larger had twins and the other a single fawn, which they constantly brought within gunshot of the drawing-room window; and when singing was going on, would pause with great curiosity and apparent pleasure.

There could be nothing more beautiful in nature than the fairy-like fawns frisking around their graceful mothers, listening to the music in rapt surprise.

After leaving Glenfalloch, at the conclusion of the autumn shooting and fishing, I always returned, accompanied by one of my sons, for a fortnight's early, and ten days' later, winter sport. Roes, of course, occupied a good deal of our attention, but woodcocks and wild-fowl had their full share of the time. We generally arranged to beat one or two of the smaller coverts before beginning to range for winged game; but we never, unless when hunting the two larger woods on the opposite side of the valley, gave a whole day to roe. Although the river Falloch intervened between the woods on the opposite and those on our side of the valley, the old bucks and yeld does often crossed backwards and forwards; but the younger bucks, and those does which had fawns at their feet, never left their own copse unless when hunted out.

On the first summer of my lease, when returning from fishing, I came suddenly upon a solitary roebuck with horns of such length and thickness as to excite both my wonder and admiration. The keeper assured me he knew him well, having tried hard the winter before to procure this famous head for my predecessor in the game tenancy. I heartily congratulated him on his failure, and myself that *my* turn was now come.

Our first winter campaign opened at Martinmas. We killed nine roes, and procured some very good heads; but *the* head, although several times started, always contrived to elude us. As was his habit, the wary old fellow kept much to the steep, widespread patches and scattered clumps on the opposite hill, where the approach of an enemy was readily seen, and the means of escape were various and easy.

The snows of 1861 came late, so the roes were at their best when we returned after Christmas to finish the shooting season. Three fell the first morning of our range—two of them old bucks, fat as venison should be, and neither had cast his horns. They were both (rare in roe-hunting) open, quiet chances. At first starting, I noticed a buck and two does on the bare hillside; but we knew, if they were properly moved, the direct path they would choose would be for the nearest copse. By taking a wide circuit, I gained the shelter of a brook commanding this sheep-track, while my companions got to windward of the deer a long way above.

I had my eye on the trio from the first; but although the drivers were directly in their wind, the roes showed no sign of uneasiness until the distance was much decreased. The buck then ceased feeding, and stood like a statue, while the does looked at him occasionally, but still kept nipping the grass. None of them seemed inclined to quit the ground until the enemy actually came in sight. They then knit together, and, led by the buck, threaded their course leisurely down the burn-side. A near view of my game was, however, obstructed by a mound, until the leader presented himself within shot. From the first I fully expected a right-and-left; but the does, on hearing the noise, ducked back and took to the hill again, while the buck, making a magnificent six-feet spring over the paling into the copse, fell dead on the other side.

About two hours later my son sighted the other buck feeding in a green open patch of an oak coppice flanked by a wall, which enabled him to secure an excellent still chance. His horns were so loose that one of them was knocked off when he fell.

With three roes in the larder on the first evening of our attack, we did not grudge a couple of frosty days to woodcock, hare, snipe, and such "small deer." On the fourth morning the keeper and pair of retrievers again plied their arduous work in the thickets. The dogs were thrown into the first patch with no great expectation of rousing a roe, but they soon feathered and opened, bringing round the quarry full before my hiding-bush. It was, as I fancied, an enormous doe; and making sure that she must be in as prime order as the bucks last killed, I had great pleasure in rolling her over. What was my disgust on walking up to find it was a buck, and to be convinced from his size and weight that he could be no other than the patriarch, whose antlers had been so often coveted, and which were now lying where he had cast them, as useless lumber, away! When this roe-deer was "gralloched," and an inside disclosed like that of a summer wedder, we began to console ourselves that, though hornless, such "a buck in the hand" might be worth both him and his horns "in the bush" of next year. These were the three bucks before alluded to; but during the last two seasons of my lease we killed not only some more bucks, but also four does, not a whit behind them in condition.

Although we had such good roe-shooting, there were only four right-and-left shots fired the whole time of our lease. Two of these doublets were distant chances, and fell to my share. Both times there were only a pair of roes; and in each case the first fell, and its neighbour, being badly wounded, was recovered shortly afterwards.

The other two double shots were fired by my second son. On the first trial he killed with one barrel; with the other he missed. Next opportunity, however, both roes dropped to shot. At this fortunate moment he occupied the highest pass on the opposite side of the Falloch, while my other son and I guarded the runs nearly in the line below him. Two large does and a buck crossed within fair range, and from the lower ground we distinctly noticed the pair drop, and the third come thundering down-hill in a frantic manner. But its panic, by scaring it from its usual track, saved its life; for although the creature came within reach of the lowest gun, a hollow of the hill hid it at the critical time. The keeper and upper shooter soon after appeared with the buck and largest doe on their shoulders, while the low-pass gun bitterly complained of the unsocial habits of all roes that had challenged its powers, avowing that, barring the dignity of twin barrels, it might as well have been a single!

A small belt of tangled brushwood fringing the Arnan burn, interspersed with tall firs which had weathered the blasts of a hundred winters, is a favourite feeding-place of the Glenfalloch roes. Seldom more than a pair at a time lodged in this quiet retreat; but whenever these were killed off, others supplied their room. As in most small plantations, the surest passes were at a little distance from the wood; and in this instance our object was to intercept them when making for the hill on their way to the next shelter. When flushed, they were almost sure to choose one of three retreats; but the two top escapes (about 100 yards apart) might with vigilance and activity be guarded by the same gun. Unless watched by eyes thoroughly used to the sport, the roes were almost certain to flit spectre-like into the burn track unperceived: in this case it was impossible to guess which of the two top escapes they would attempt, until too late to change should they attempt the unguarded one. The quick and wary eye of a practised roe-hunter seldom gave them this advantage; and watching every fall or rise in the intervening ground where a passing glimpse might be snatched, he could with all but certainty predict their course, and be ready to welcome them with a salute. I had a particular fancy for these two passes, and by means of a smart race between them now and then, killed six roes, and did not allow a single escape to the hills.[1]

Our last hunting-day at Glenfalloch was perhaps the most exciting and scientific I ever took part in. We had already bagged 28 roes, and were careless of shooting more—the day, in fact, being intended for small game. The pair of larch-trees which spanned the Falloch, claiming equal right with the celebrated Menai to the title and dignity of bridge, had been safely crossed. Ben Glass with its rugged face had been wellnigh breasted, and I was thinking of the old "packman" frozen to death a year before, and whose cairn, with a shred of his wretched clothes, lay close at hand, when my son gave the warning word "roes!" There were three in group, and a fourth at a short distance from them. All were full-grown, and much of a size. Except for a scanty sprinkling of trees interspersed with occasional patches of brushwood, the whole hill-face was bare, and this bareness was more apparent from a thick coating of snow. The creatures seemed fully to comprehend the situation, and to know as well as we did how difficult it would be to steal on them unperceived. Those in company therefore went leisurely ahead, while the single one deigned no further retreat than to move a little on one side, so as to give us "a wide berth" in passing him. Our game, by showing equal carelessness and *sang froid*, was to entice them to slip quietly into some secluded hiding, either among the alder-bushes fringing the brooks which seamed the mountain-side, or perhaps behind some cluster of hillocks, where by humouring the wind we could stalk them like deer.

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[1] A woodcock was hiding within a few yards of the place where one of these roes fell. It sprang when we were examining the dead animal, and was cut down by a roe charge.

As in all wild shooting, success depended entirely on our marking the next resting retreat of the roes, without making them aware that we had done so. It was, in fact, a fair trial, whether we or our game had the keener eyes; for if the snow-tracks gave us a hint where to direct our survey, the fugitives were quite aware that we were hanging on their rear; and the three pairs of trained and skilful eyes, scanning every rugged "neuk" of the forward ground, were well matched by three pairs as watchful and wary, noting every moving speck from behind, rendered more distinct by the weary waste of snow.

Twice the skulkers attempted concealment, their first retreat being found out by my son, and the second by myself. Both times, however, they had an eye on us first, and, instinctively warned by our bearing, moved on again with quiet and cautious step.

"They'll no' stop noo till they get as far as the aigle's nest forenent Corrynge," quoth the keeper, while we doggedly determined not to let them off while there was daylight.

This wood, a straggling patch of alder and hazel in the gorge of a rocky corrie where the eagle and raven built, was at the extremity of our shooting beat. There was still another stiff climb to it, so, despatching the keeper and retrievers to follow the course of the burn on the low side of the scrub-wood, my son and I leisurely scaled the mountain for the high passes. We calculated that the keeper would require half an hour before getting to the far end of the wood, and fully an hour must elapse ere he could drive the roes forward to our passes on the near side. These passes were some hundred yards apart, and I was dreamily sauntering to mine when I stumbled on the tracks of our game. In a moment I saw they were shirking the wood, and evidently bent on topping the mountain, most likely with the intention of regaining their former ground. A more cunning manœuvre could not have been planned, and had it not been for the tell-tale snow, it would have been completely successful.

Briskly following up the "spoor" to the first fair look-out, I soon detected the three resting at the high corner of the wood, but without having entered it. They were as yet distant, but their still watchfulness, and the equality of the ground, made it impossible to stalk them. To my surprise and pleasure, a low whistle from the adjacent height revealed my son's head peering also at the roes. He had noted my change of course, and at once suspecting the cause, had actually seen our game before I did. There now seemed a fair prospect of success; for by placing him above on the outer shoulder of the hill, and creeping on them myself from below, the deer would be very likely to cross within reach of the high gun.

During the whole time these hunting tactics were going on, the roes, with the exception of turning their heads now and then to look and listen, kept perfectly motionless, and I was first made aware that my comrade had turned their flank by the united eyes and ears of the listeners being raised in the same direction. Instantly aware of their danger, they marched with deliberate caution round the base of the hillock on the other side of which was the gun, and again were safe from the snare. Sharper-eared than Indians, they had heard stealthy footsteps on the crusted snow, and fairly circumvented their pursuers by this masterly double. The snow which had revealed them made amends by being the abettor of their escape; and it seemed as if the white carpet spread on the mountain by the skies disdained to have its purity sullied by the red blood of the victims which itself had betrayed.

Scarcely had the three roes flitted from the high ground above me, when the keeper and retrievers rose from the hollow underneath. His hawk eye had caught a glimpse of the guns on the hillside, and seen that we avoided the passes; and, profiting by this discovery, he had followed in the wake, until he too perceived the cause. Unable, however, to find out our plan of approach, he had prudently kept himself and dogs in hiding until the deer made their wary exit.

A better illustration of the power to compel success which knowledge of the sport gives the roe-hunter, I have seldom had the pleasure to record. Here were three men left entirely to their own resources, and none of them made the slightest mistake. At parting, they all made sure that their game had taken shelter in the wood. These deer at first were half a mile distant from the nearest gun, and yet all three hunters, though far separated, detected them and marked their last dodge, while they themselves had no idea that even one spy had witnessed their cunning.

The short winter day was fast wearing out, but the pursuers' hopes were as strong as ever. The roes had been scarcely able to feed all the forenoon, and they no doubt felt confident that the last clever trick on the hill-peak had fairly entitled them to a supper. We were therefore quite convinced that they would settle to the evening meal at the first convenient halting-spot.

Giving his gun to the keeper, my son scouted forward with a telescope, and from screen of rock or tree scrutinised the hiding corries or scrubby patches which might possibly shelter our game. Crawling on hand and knee to the pinnacle of a wide look-out, we saw his attention fixed. Up goes the glass, to remain steady for a few seconds, when it was shut up with a satisfied jerk, and he descended on all-fours. Before a word was spoken I felt sure the chase was at length happily safe.

The three roes were greedily eating among some stunted birches skirting a mountain brook, which, from the direction of the wind and the lay of the feeding-ground, could not have been more aptly placed. Leaving the keeper with dogs and telescope on the top of the mound, the shooters mapped out so wide a flank movement as to prevent the possibility of being either seen or winded by the quarry, now at last careless and secure.

The various eccentric turns and doubles of our game had again placed us close to the spot where we first found them at noon, and with so fair a prospect of coming to close quarters at the end of the day, no wonder that the fourth unsociable buck was quite overlooked. Scarcely had we quitted the keeper and dived for concealment among the rugged peaks and scaurs of the mountain-face, when "the solitary" burst from his lair among the whins right athwart our course; but scarcely had he got into his stride when a shot from my son's gun paralysed the fleet limbs that had almost saved him, and, rolling over the crag, he lay powerless at its foot.

Our first act was to cast an eye on the look-out. There he was, steady as the rock he leaned on, neither the shot nor the fall of the roe having slackened for an instant his attention from the watch we had set him. Our deer was soon despatched, cleaned, and hung on the nearest tree. We then pointed in the direction of the birches. A nod from the scout gave confidence to our stalk, being a well-understood signal that the trio had not been moved by the shot.

Thoroughly acquainted with the ground, the younger sportsman took position on line, but considerably beyond the birches where the deer were feeding; while the elder took advantage of a hillock about a hundred yards below, and close to the burn scaur.

A slight motion of my cap warned the keeper to come on. He first slipped out of sight for a little time, and began to whistle and speak to his canine accomplices, gradually emerging, as if accidentally, into view, having exactly the appearance of a shepherd "wearing" his flock. Dozens of times, we well knew, the roes had witnessed this operation, and were quite callous to it; so when the man now wheeled to the right, then to the left, but always nearing them as if by chance, the creatures were as easily herded as three "harvest hogs." They strayed slowly down the burn, and I was first aware that they were close upon my hiding-place by a head peering over the mound within pistol-shot of the muzzle of my gun. Anxious for a right-and-left, I was loath to fire until the three had topped the hillock, so the rejected head caught sight of its contemner, and ducking back warned the others, when they all scampered away.

I was on the hillock-top in an instant, but an unfortunate dip in the ground hid them until nearly out of reach, when I fired and struck the rear one bounding straight from me. At full pitch of their speed, the now terrified creatures dashed past the high gun, a long cross-shot. The leader fell dead, but the others, scared anew, swerved down-hill, only allowing the second barrel time for a distant snap at the one I had before struck. The pair rushed down the burn's bank, one of them crossed, and immediately showing on the other side, darted up the hill at full stride: why the other lagged behind, we were at no loss to guess.

There was no dispute about the lurking-place of the wounded roe. Without a word we at once began the search, and found him at the very spot we anticipated. He was standing sideways at seventy yards from my feet, when I fired and dropped him on his side. He rose, and struggling down the steep, was quickly pulled down by my favourite retriever.

The dusk was now merging into darkness, the chase having lasted from high noon till past five o'clock. Weary and hungry, with a heavy roe slung upon each of our shoulders, and a long, rough, dark journey home, I will nevertheless make bold to assert that a more " heartsome " or a merrier one never was taken.

After the many splendid roe-hunts I have followed, both in former and in later years, it is my firm conviction that gun-fanciers can only undervalue this sport from lack of knowledge. No doubt deer-stalking is both interesting and exciting to a tyro even from the first. He has the whole open panorama spread before him, and a sort of hazy, mystified conception of the plan of operations. Above all, he is encouraged by the stalker (in whose hands he is a mere puppet) with the probability, nay, almost certainty, of a fair rifle-shot at a noble hart. Very different is the pursuit of the roe. The shooter is, *or ought to be,* left to his own unaided powers, and many a blunder will he perpetrate, and many a hard day's work undergo, before he acquires the skill to warrant success. Confidence, of course, grows in proportion to the skill; but many sportsmen give up heart ere they have gained either, and naturally stigmatise " the following of the roe " as " dull work," and point perhaps to the few wretched specimens they have slain out of season as evidences that roes are equally unsatisfactory both when hunted and on the table.

I have been assured by a Fife proprietor that roes are migratory in the border counties. They come down, he said, from the Highlands in numbers during severe weather, returning to their hills again when the storms abated, exactly like deer. In my Highland shootings, however, I never noticed any decrease of roes when the winters were at their roughest; and had there been an exodus from my woods I must have perceived it, as I always knew well before Christmas what roe-deer were on the ground.

One of the most curious sporting incidents I ever knew in connection with roes happened in 1869 in the near wood of Ballimore. My son and the game-watcher were ferreting there with an Italian greyhound, very expert at coursing rabbits. When the ferrets were searching the holes, Myrtle ran off on a warm track, but soon apparently brought her game to bay. Presently she gave a yell of pain and rushed back, pursued by a female roe, which overtook her within thirty yards of the ferreters, striking her such a pounder on the back that it left its mark for a week afterwards. The next day, when again after rabbits in the same wood, the little dog set full cry after one; but immediately the grunt of the doe rang through the trees, and Myrtle appeared flying before her in abject terror, taking refuge with the rabbiters, the roe dodging close round them, showing every sign of fury.

The most extraordinary part of the whole was, that several days afterwards, when the dog sprang a rabbit at the far end of the wood, the moment the doe heard her bark, it came bounding a full mile to where it heard the sound, while Myrtle, terrified by the roaring and crashing of the bushes, dashed back to her protectors at high-pressure speed. Of course the doe had her fawn in that wood; but such fierceness in its defence showed the surpassing power of maternal instinct, which had so completely changed the nature of the timid roe.

SEAL-SHOOTING.

"No man," says the old Highlander, "has any right to a hunter's badge who has not killed a red-deer, an eagle, a salmon, and a seal." Some also include the wild swan; but this last test of Highland sportsmanship seems scarcely fair, as the hooper is a cosmopolitan bird of passage, frequenting in hard winters most of the undisturbed pieces of water in the United Kingdom. Although the lonely moor lochan is a favourite resort both of Bewick's and the common wild swan, there are also large tracts among our wildest mountain districts where they are never seen, or even heard of. I should therefore be inclined to reckon the hooper as a more correct criterion of skill in an English fenman with mud boots and tarpaulins, than in a brogued and kilted Gael.

The killing of red-deer and salmon has been of late years so simplified by preservation, and by artificial modes of sporting, that even the Cockney who possesses the talisman (money) will very soon be made free both of the forest and the river. What would the ancient hillman have thought of forests where the deer were nearly as tame as sheep, and so numerous as to be dwarfed both in size and antlers? With what contempt would he have growled his guttural at the sunk fences of the forest, and the boat-fishing of Loch Tay and the Tweed, when both are so crowded with spring or autumn fish that the veriest greenhorn could not escape hooking them!

This may be called the luxury of sport, but it is not the pleasure of it, for certainly our best pleasures must all be worked for and earned: at all events, these lazy and luxurious modes of deer and salmon murder were never contemplated by the Celt who, in granting his diploma to a mountain hunter, deemed a single head of the famous four quite sufficient to entitle him to it.

Preserving, the chief means of bringing down to the level of almost any aspirant two of the four exploits required for a hunting degree, has, by driving it into remote fastnesses, made a third—viz., the death of an eagle—tolerably difficult to compass. As to the last on the list, let any one try to bag a seal under the most favourable auspices, and he may find the task less easy than it appears. I say "bag one" in place of shoot one, for most parties who have made the attempt with their rifles assure you they have been the death of many seals. On pressing the point, you are informed that they all sank on receiving the fatal bullet, and that the defunct monsters are rotting under the waves.

For my own part—except of those struck through the body on land—I have little faith in the death of seals thus suddenly submerged. When hit on land, if the shot is not a header, they are very likely to flounder into the sea and sink in deep water before you can possibly get hold of or trace them. But all swimming seals, if hit at all, are shot through the head, and immediately spread out on the surface, giving ample time to row up and seize a flipper. When the shooter has no boat, and does not possess the assistance of a large retriever dog, he should never fire at seals unless in places where, if killed, they can be recovered when the tide ebbs.

The sight of seals is not quick, but their other senses of scent and hearing are most acute. In stalking, either from land or water, they are more difficult of approach than deer; and in a calm day the creak or splash of an oar instantly puts the basking shoal on their guard, when they roll helter-skelter into the brine. As they can wind you at a mile's distance, coming on them to windward is out of the question; for on the scent warning that the enemy is dangerously near, they shuffle from the rocks into the safety of the deep. Although long aware of threatened danger, they are often too lethargic to flee until it really becomes imminent; but this laziness never tempts them to be so foolhardy as to risk their life.

A dead calm is, of course, best for seal-shooting from a boat, but a *favourable* breeze is an advantage, should the shoal be sunning themselves on the rocks; in which case, when afloat, always try to land and stalk from the shore. If from the direction of the wind or other obstacles this be impracticable, the shore chance from a boat is frequently an indifferent one, but the shot at the head when they come up after *the first dive* is almost certain to be point-blank.

A boat for seals should be light, and should draw as little water as possible. For this purpose, and to prevent rocking, the build must be broad, short, and flat. Frequently you have to pole through shallows only a few inches deep, while now and then dragging your shallop over an isthmus may be the only means of securing an excellent chance. As dead seals always lie on their backs at the bottom, their white bellies may be seen at a considerable depth. A strong cord with very large hooks and lead attached is, therefore, a most useful appendage to fish them up.

The monster ocean seals were rare in Loch-na-Gaul, but I have detected one or two about the entrance of the loch—always, however, shy of trusting themselves within bullet-range, and shunning the parts of the coast or the rocks where they might possibly be surprised. In the outer Hebrides these prodigious creatures are tame enough, and roam along the shores, the tyrants of these wild seas. I saw the skin of one, shot off the Colonsay coast by a nephew of the then Lord Justice-General, which weighed 30 stone. It unexpectedly elevated half its body out of the water, close to the young sportsman, when he shot it through the lungs.

One fine September day, when walking with a friend on the south shore of Loch-na-Gaul, fourteen Arctic seals came racing past close to land. They jumped and gambolled over each other like boys at leap-frog, making a splash in the sea that gave notice of their advent a good way off. After coursing some distance in this boisterous style they settled on a rock, and by stalking we got within rifle-range; but not having a rifle, we were fain to content ourselves with a survey through the telescope—the first and last sight I ever had of these rare visitors from the Polar seas.

Even a quick eye requires practice ere it becomes expert at distinguishing basking seals on the rocks. They are so like tufts of sea-ware or detached stones both in shape and colour, that the uninitiated may have a dozen ranged at no great distance, yet never perceive one. The smallest suspicious object, however, at once arrests the attention of an experienced seal-shooter, and he instantly fixes the glass to watch for a curve of the tail or a bend of the head. Like wild-fowl and deer, when you detect the prey *before you are yourself perceived,* success is half attained; but this far sight and keenness of eye can only be arrived at by long use, and is one of the brightest feathers of the hunter's cap.

A reef of rocks near the head of Loch-na-Gaul, although completely submerged at high tide, begins to show itself at quarter ebb, and at low water it expands into considerable islets. This group is the favourite drying-ground of seals in summer, and the nursery where they rear their young. Every calm, hot day, when the islets are left bare and quiet, the large heads of the female seals, each followed by a little head, oftener by a pair no bigger than cricket-balls, float about the tiny bays, while the old males sun themselves luxuriously on the shelving rocks. Whenever this dry sunny weather prevented salmon-fishing in Loch Baa, the coble was carted from the fresh- to the salt-water loch, and seals substituted for salmon.

After a sultry fortnight towards the end of June, I noted with the telescope a flock of seals ranged like sheep along the centre rock of the group. A short time before, a new (Henry) rifle had been forwarded; what an opportunity to handsel it! The boatman was summoned, the rifle unpacked and loaded, without even a pluff of powder to spoil Mr Henry's "luck." A high rock of the nearest islet, where I landed, screened us from the herd, but they were beyond rifle-range, and there was no possibility of a closer approach. My tactics were soon fixed. Taking post under a rock close to the sea, I made the man unmuffle the oars, and, keeping out of view, to pull away with as much noise and bustle as he could. The success of this manœuvre depended entirely on rousing the inquisitiveness of the sleepers. No sooner was the sound of the oars heard so near than the whole troop wriggled into the water, and two of the largest sailed past my rock at 80 yards' distance, peering curiously round for a sight of the boat. Selecting the moment when his poll was my target, I fired, and one of the monsters lay stretched on the sea. My second barrel was ready for his companion, which of course had dived, but *his* curiosity being satisfied, he never reappeared. The boatman obeyed my signal at his utmost speed, and all but upset the coble in dragging the seal on board. It was a male, and weighed 9 stone.

The weather continuing calm and warm, the same shoal a few days after settled on one of the further rocks; but the look-out was too open to permit of our cheating them again, so there was nothing to be done but raise the long sight. I fired at three in line, and must have hit a pair of them, for we traced two tracks of blood to the sea, entering it from opposite sides of the rock. The surface was also covered with their fur, but the water was far too deep to allow any hope of detecting them at the bottom if dead.

The seals were now getting shy of these rocks, but a burning day again enticed them to try a *siesta:* this time, however, they cunningly chose a bare exposure, *all but* safe from surprise. On taking a survey with the telescope from the mainland, I arranged a plan by which we had a prospect of getting within 150 yards, but the operation was both difficult and tedious. By landing on the outermost islet, and carrying the coble right across into a creek dividing the first from the second reef of rocks, we could pole down to the shelter of a large stone, which might enable the stalker, by a wet crawl among the sea-weed, to reach the distance I had calculated for a chance. A crew of four was needed for the land-transport of our skiff; but to effect this *quietly* over slippery rocks, although the turning-point of our strategy, was its most trying part. The moist sea-ware caused a few false steps among the rough rocks, but its softness prevented these stumbles from being heard by the seals, so the coble was safely lodged in the creek. It was quickly pushed down this latch, when I had to crawl flat a little way among shingle and sea-weed in order to reach the nearest point for the shot.

After carefully noting the postures of the unsuspicious but scattered flock, being unable to get two in line, I put up the 150-yard sight and selected one of the nearest. Instantly I saw and heard the ball strike my mark true to the aim. Its companions dashed into the sea, but the wounded seal rolled about on the sand, and then struggled after them. When in the water, in place of only the head, the whole disabled shoulder rose above the surface, and the dives were short and laborious. My boatmen, making sure of their prize, pulled with all their might, but in mid career an oar snapped, and there was no spare one. With the stump of the oar they followed the path of blood, and every time the creature came to the top for air the sea was dyed red all round. Had I and my rifle been aboard, I could with the greatest ease have sent a ball through its head before the air-supply was pumped out by the death-struggle, when it would have floated till we pulled up. Even with a pair of whole oars there was every likelihood of getting hold of the prey alive; but by lamely following it with an oar-stump the creature bravely fought on till it died, and then, quite empty of buoyant air, disappeared at once in deep water. For the truthfulness of my narrative I have entered into these details, but must acknowledge that such casualties in seal-shooting fully counterbalance its pleasures.

This reaching of them when they felt so secure, and the smell of their comrades' blood, made the *phoca* troop shy of their rocks for some time. Before they again dared risk the pleasure of a bask, copious rain enticed us back to Loch Baa and the salmon, and it was the beginning of August ere I had another opportunity at seals.

The Garmony farmer had complained of a deer injuring his ripening crops, so to please him we came over to Scalastal for a range of Garmony wood. After an early breakfast the shepherds and dogs were sent forward to the farther end of the covert, and I was loading my rifle and about to follow, when one of them ran back to tell us that a seal was resting on a submerged stone in the Sound, opposite the farm gate. He had detained the deer-hunt until he knew whether the rival claimant for the contents of my rifle would be first honoured. My son and the grieve went to reconnoitre, and reported that the seal was more than 200 yards from the gate. The stone was some three feet under water, and the creature, by resting its hind flippers on this platform, was standing upright in the sea, the head presenting even less of a mark than if the seal had been actually swimming. It was impossible to get closer than the gate, which, however, gave the advantage of a fine rest.

I always like shooting ball at objects in water, as a man is at once aware what kind of shot he has made. In this instance I did not expect to hit, but determined in the face of four witnesses to go as near as possible to my aim. I never fired with more deliberate calculation, but own I was nearly as surprised as the onlookers when the animal stretched on the surface dead. There was a rush by the two fleetest of our party for the rickety skiff; but long ere it was possible to pull round, I had the mortification to see my prize turn on its back and sink. I directed the rowers to the very spot, but although there were two pairs of as sharp eyes as ever scanned the deep, they could see nothing white at the bottom. On coming into the skiff, I at once perceived that there was no possibility of detecting the object of our search except at the lowest ebb of the tide.

Our interrupted deer-hunt was again resumed, but there being neither hoof nor horn to delay us in Garmony wood, we had plenty time to be at the seal again by the turn of the tide. After launching the skiff and placing a shepherd to direct our course from the shore, my son, the grieve, and I endeavoured to find the resting-stone, now confounded with several others; but an unfortunate breeze[1] so obscured and hindered the search, that we had gone round and over the white mark three times before my son called out, "I see him." With difficulty backing the boat so as to keep sight of the creature for the few seconds required to cast off my coat and shoes, I plunged into the sea, and at the first dive caught hold of the hind flippers and raised it to the boat-side. Had we been provided with our seal-grappling apparatus (left at Glenforsa), from the roughness of the water and the strength of the wind, the task would have been both more lengthy and precarious. The seal was a female between 7 and 8 stones weight.

Late in the season, when the colder days had thinned the Loch-na-Gaul rocks of their floundering visitants, my eldest son, who had been absent all the seal season, and was anxious to bag one, had the fishing-coble again transplanted for a day or two from Loch Baa to the salt water. He took post on one of the islets, and in orthodox style, Hythe position, hit his game fair through the head, swimming fully 100 yards off. This seal, however, did not require either a dive or the grappling-hooks, as I managed to get hold of and drag it into the skiff before it settled and sank.

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[1] When wind ruffles the surface of the sea, a plain tube to fit the face, with plate-glass at the lower end, will greatly help to detect submerged seals. Its length should be four feet and a half, by half a foot diameter, and the glass end heavily weighted, to make it sink. It is, however, a lumbering concern, and would hardly repay the seal-shooter the trouble of its carriage.

The instinct of these amphibious creatures seldom allows them to be surprised far from the sea. On rocky coasts, where the water deepens suddenly, only a few land-shuffles are required to enable them to take the plunge. Flat sandy beaches, where the tide ebbs rapidly, may sometimes deceive them; but even there the look-out is too good to give any chance of a shot. I have watched them in the sandbanks of Sligo Bay, on the west coast of Ireland, and I have seldom seen *single* seals, except close to the water. Now and then the group allowed the sea to recede pretty far, but they never *all* slept; one or two sentinels were always on the alert, and at the most distant approach of danger, there was a general scramble to the sea. Two of my friends and I tried them with deer-toils, but they always avoided the snare. Occasionally a very young one was left high and dry; but this also happens on rocky coasts, even within a few yards of the water.

A party of seal-shooters placed one of their number on a narrow point of rock surrounded by deep water. As there was nothing to hide him, he stood bolt upright, expecting a stray chance at a passing seal. When his companions had rowed away, they were followed by a large seal, which all of a sudden spied the solitary being on the rock. Instantly wheeling about, it made for him at its utmost speed. His friends, suspecting the monster, shouted to warn him, but he thought they only meant to apprise him of a fine chance; he therefore allowed it to come quite close, and coolly shot it dead. It was a female in defence of her young; and had he failed in his aim, she would most likely have toppled him over the narrow ledge, and drowned him in the deep water. He said that if he had known his risk, he would in all probability have missed.

Glass, the boatman who attended my wild-fowl excursions on the Firth of Forth, at North Berwick, had an enormous blue Russian water-dog. He was a very ferocious brute, and the most resolute dog in the water I ever saw. I have often admired his thirty-feet leap off the pier into the sea. He came as near to be amphibious as a dog well could. Point to any floating object, however distant, and he bounded out of the boat, and made for it like a shark. One of the smaller species of seal, called by fishermen the sea-dog, was watching the boat; Glass pointed to it, and out bounced rough Blue, determined on making a capture. Instead of sheering off or diving, the enemy met him half-way, when the dog seized like a vice. For a second or two the battle was fierce on the top of the water, but when the seal dived, nothing was to be seen but the stream of bubbles where the combat was raging below. This lasted so long that poor Jack Russ was given over for drowned. At last he came to the surface in so forlorn a plight, that he had to be lifted into the boat. So high was the courage of this dog, that he would have gone at another seal as readily the next day, and fought him as fiercely too. Glass offered to sell him to me for £2, but as he was only a machine to fetch fowl out of the water, and not otherwise well trained as a retriever, I declined him. He was soon after sold as a watch for a wood-yard.

The old male seals fight as savagely as deer for the females, and cut and mangle each other fearfully in their encounters.

CAPERCAILZIE-SHOOTING.

NEVER having had an opportunity of firing at the wood-grouse, I borrow from my eldest son's notes the following record of two or three days' sport with these magnificent birds.

"By the kind permission of a Perthshire friend (the proprietor), he went to Lude to try for capercailzie to complete the grouse family of our collection. The flight of this bird on first starting is somewhat peculiar—decidedly trying to the skill of a sportsman—as, resting hidden within a few feet of the top of the spruce-firs, he usually descends like a cannon-ball to within a short distance of the ground, and then, having got way on, gradually rises to the height of the tops of the trees. As these spruce-firs are so close to each other, the shot is almost always a snap, confined to about ten or fifteen yards of open ground. The time to pick it, if possible, is when the bird steadies itself for the forward flight, after having made the downward swoop.

"With a keeper on either hand, the black fir-woods were ranged by sections, the crisp shining snow, however, giving the birds early notice of the approach of the party. During two days the woods were searched in vain, for although often seen, and once or twice within fair distance of one of the keepers, they always eluded the gun—the only shot obtained being a right-and-left at roe-deer, on the second day, securing both. On the third, the sportsman was at last successful in dropping a magnificent cock with No. 4. Although very anxious for a mate, not another chance at either cock or hen could be obtained."

Next winter he again tried the same pine-wood, and had the satisfaction of bringing down another cock and two old hens in finest feather.

From the windows of Garth, in Glenlyon, I used to watch these noble birds congregated on the opposite bank of the river every morning. Black-game were often feeding with the capercailzie. In the evenings too, coming home from my walk down the glen, I often noted about a dozen black-game attended always by one capercailzie cock. Now and then he gave a peck at an old black-cock, who always gave way; but the capercailzie was not otherwise overbearing. In spring, no doubt, this cock would have this harem of grey hens, and the hybrids so often shot of late would be the result.

Within the last few years I have examined two of these crosses, one being shown to me by Small the bird-stuffer.

I may remark here that Small has put up my son's American collection with great skill and taste.

GROUSE AND BLACK-GAME SHOOTING.

Grouse-shooting, when the season begins, and our moors are thronged by ardent sportsmen from all parts of the kingdom, although requiring some tact and skill, is mere child's-play compared to what it becomes when the birds are wild and wary.

In the month of August or September, a few general rules may enable a good shot, upon a tolerable moor, to load his game-carrier. He should commence upon the farthest end of his range, giving his dogs the wind, and select some part of the moor, near the centre, to which he must endeavour to drive all his packs. His follower should be a good marker,[1] active and intelligent in comprehending his least signal, and always ready, when the dogs point, to place himself so as to prevent the birds taking a wrong direction. After having skirmished in this way until about two or three o'clock, he may send for a fresh couple of his oldest and most experienced dogs, and, with the greatest care, begin to beat this reserved ground. If the day is favourable, and he has not strangely mismanaged, he ought to make bloody work. Should his range be along the steep side of a mountain, the birds are much less likely to leave the ground; when raised, they will probably (unless he is beating up and down the hill, which is neither an easy nor a good way) fly straight along the mountain-side, and the young grouse-shooter might suppose would drop down upon a line with the place they rose from. But no such thing: the pack, after getting out of sight, before lighting will take a turn, and fly a considerable way either to the right or left. The sportsman must judge by the wind,[1] the nature of the ground, &c., which direction they have taken: if he can see the way their heads are turned just when going out of sight, he may also form a shrewd guess; but if he does not find them on the one side, he must try the other. Should he have the whole of a detached hill, even if a small range, the birds are so unwilling to leave it at the beginning of the season that they will often fly round and round until he has completely broken them: no finer opportunity than this for filling the bag. Early in the season, when an unbroken pack is found at evening feed, if the birds do not rise together, too much care cannot be taken to search the ground. They often wander a good way from each other, and after hearing a shot will lie till they are almost trod upon.

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[1] In marking grouse, when you can no longer distinguish them from the brown heather, still let your eye follow their course, as the flapping of their wings when they light is much longer discernible than the rapid motion of their flight.

On some of our moors, grouse are as plentiful as partridges in the preserved turnip-fields of Norfolk: no man would then break his beat to follow a pack; but let him select the lowest and most likely ground, as near the centre of his range as possible, for his evening shooting. Grouse, and indeed all game, when raised, generally fly to lower ground, and when they begin to move about on the feed, are more easily found by the dogs; for which reason the evening is always the most successful time of the day.[2]

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[1] If high, grouse are very apt to fly with it, unless they have some stronger motive to the contrary.

[2] Should the sportsman knock down an old cock and hen, and afterwards have the mortification to see the "squeaking" pack rise all round him, my advice is *not* to massacre them from the idea that, if left alone, they must *necessarily* die a more cruel death. I know most keepers will say that the young birds would starve, and I *was* of the same opinion; but I began to doubt the truth of it some time since, and a few years ago I had an opportunity of proving its fallacy. On

The experienced grouse-shooter well knows how little it will avail him to attempt to find out the best part of a moor with which he is unacquainted, by a distant *coup-d'œil*, or by theory, however plausible. On the same range the packs will be strongest and most numerous one year on the top of the hill, another on the brow, and a third on the flat at the foot, and this often without any assignable reason. A man who chooses his range by rule will be as likely to fix on the worst as the best. The only plan, supposing he has neglected to make himself acquainted with the ground before the 12th of August, is to find out from the shepherds where the packs are most plentiful, and concert measures accordingly. It often happens that, if the hatching-time is very rainy, the best packs may be found on the brow of a hill, from being less exposed to the wet; and in a dry sultry season the best places to range are the flats between the hills, or even the tops, if dotted with "peat-hags."[1] The very reverse, however, may be the case if there are few mossy springs or peat-hags on the flat or top, and if the hillside is supplied with water for the

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a part of my moor where the birds were very scarce, I got a point, and after killing a brace was proceeding to pick them up, when the young pack rose, five in number, as decided "squeakers" as ever struck remorse into the callous heart of the shooter. I at once determined to ascertain whether poults left in so unprotected a state *must* die. So, after ranging the ground most carefully for a considerable distance, to be certain there was no other pack near, I left them undisturbed for eight days. At the end of that time I found and shot two of them, not at all fallen off in condition, and quite large enough to count in the day's return of the slain. These poults were not in company, but at a little distance from each other. It therefore appears to me that their great danger is from vermin, missing the warning cry of the old birds when an enemy approaches. There can be no doubt of its being both cruel and destructive to the young brood to murder their protectors; but should the sportsman unfortunately do so, and not discover his mistake till too late, he had better give them the chance of escaping vermin than shoot them *out of humanity*, erroneously supposing that they cannot but die of starvation.

[1] Places where peats have been "cast" or dug out, in which the moss-water collects, and affords drink to the grouse. Sometimes these "hags" are formed by natural rifts in the bog, with a small red brook running through. This water is very unwholesome, and a man had better bear his thirst than drink it. The peat-stack is a sure index of these supplies of water, and can be seen at a considerable distance.

young packs by a constant succession of little brooks. It is impossible for a stranger to find out these *minutiæ* without questioning those who are in the habit of travelling the hill, and who will be just as likely to know *what is of more consequence*—viz., where the packs are to be found in the greatest abundance.

As to the ground *immediately* round him, a man accustomed to the moors can always tell whether it is likely to harbour game; and let him be ranging the top, the ridge, the brow, or the flat at the foot of the hill, if he is surrounded by alternate patches of old and young heather, interspersed with numerous green mossy springs, or peat-hags half filled with water, he is in full expectation of a point. If, on the contrary, the ground is bare and the heather burnt, or if it be growing in one unvarying crop of rank luxuriance, he looks anxiously for a break, and almost grudges the unflagging exertions of his persevering dogs. Still he never gives up hope, and often finds game where he least expects it.

When grouse are raised on the top or brow of a hill, the flight is generally much shorter than when found on a level at the foot. In the latter case, they generally fly far out of sight; but if the ground is hilly and uneven, they often take a few dodging turns and drop down at no great distance. On the steep peak of the heathery hill, I have seen them fly quite round, and again settle not far from where they were first discovered. In fine weather, before the packs are strong, and especially before they have been much shot at, their flights are usually not nearly so long as they are afterwards; but even then, should the day be windy, they are generally rapid and uncertain. When this is unfortunately the case, they are so capricious in the choice of their refuge as often to baffle the most determined tramper of the moors.

Grouse are much more difficult to find in the middle of the day than in the morning and evening, when they move more about; but in sultry weather they lie quite still, except at feeding-time; and not having stirred perhaps for hours, the dogs may come within a yard or two before winding them. To procure shots at such times tries the mettle both of the sportsman and his dogs. During continued rain, they are apt to gather beneath the shade of a hillock, or in scaurs and ravines. To continue ranging is mere waste of time, until it clears and the ground has dried a little; for, to say nothing of the other miseries, the birds, even when found, will not run a yard in the wet heather, and will generally take wing at a long distance. When the weather is boisterous, they are very fidgety and wild, even at the beginning of the season. It is then easy to see who does and who does not understand anything of grouse-shooting. Every inequality of ground must be taken advantage of. The sportsman should crouch as much as he can, wearing a drab-coloured cap, which will often take him five or six yards nearer his game than the lowest-crowned hat he can procure. If possible, he should always advance from lower ground, walking up any cracks or hollows in the moss. When this is skilfully done, he appears to the birds at a greater distance than when they see his whole figure prominently coming down upon them from higher ground. I have already said, that if you have reason to suppose the pack are on the side or at the foot of a steep hillock, *only a gunshot in height*, the best plan to pop upon them within reach is to come straight over the top; but under other circumstances, this should never be attempted.

Most young shots are not content unless they are upon the moor by peep of day on the long-anticipated 12th of August. And what is the result? They have found and disturbed most of the packs before they have well fed, and one half will rise out of distance, and fly away unbroken. Had the moor been left quiet till eight or nine o'clock, fair double shots might have been obtained at almost every pack, and many would have been scattered for the evening shooting. It will generally be found that if two equal shots, upon equal moors, uncouple their dogs, one at five o'clock and the other at eight, and compare notes at two in the afternoon, the lazy man will have the heavier game-bag, and his ground will be in the best order for the deadly time of the day, to say nothing of his competitor's disadvantage from having fruitlessly wasted his own strength and that of his dogs, when many of the packs would not allow him to come within reach. My advice, therefore, to the young grouse-shooter, is always to wait till the dew is dry on the heather. If he starts at eight o'clock, and travels the moors as he ought, there is time enough before dark to put his powers to the proof, however he may pique himself upon them. I do not mean to say he must run over the ground, but keep up a steady determined walk, up-hill and down-hill, without flagging for an instant, unless the dogs come upon the scent of game. Of all sports, grouse-shooting is the most laborious. None can stand a comparison with it except deer-stalking; and yet the veriest "soft," puffing and blowing at every step, may put off a whole day upon the moors—travelling them I will not call it—and boast after dinner that "he wonders how people can find grouse-shooting so toilsome and fatiguing; *fox-hunting* is much more so!"

There are a few rules which a man not accustomed to climb hills will find his account in observing, if he would escape the suppressed smile of derision which his flagging will be sure to excite from the sturdy hillman who carries his bag. One is, to eat a very light breakfast; another, to drink as little as possible—but especially no spirits and water. If you can hold out without drinking till your luncheon- or dinner-time, your thirst will never be very oppressive; but once begin, and the difficulty of passing a clear brook is very much increased. The provision-basket should only consist of a cold fowl or a few sandwiches, and a bottle of table-beer or light ale. When you again begin your exertions, make your attendant carry a bottle of strong tea, without cream or sugar, which will more effectually quench your thirst than a whole flaskful of spirits and water to correspond. Should any object to this "*tea-total*" system, a little fruit may be no bad substitute. When I first took out a licence, I thought the spirit-flask almost as indispensable as the powder-flask; but experience has since taught me that nothing more effectually expends the remaining strength of the half-worn-out sportsman than a few pulls at the liquor-flask, however diluted: he gains a temporary stimulus, which soon ends in complete exhaustion.

As the season advances, and the birds become strong on the wing, the difficulty of breaking the packs is tenfold increased, and the sportsman's energy and activity are doubly tried; for although he has not to endure the burning heat of August and September, yet his pace may with advantage be quickened, as there is less risk of passing birds; and he should also carry a heavier gun. Taking everything into consideration, a medium between the common fowling-piece and that recommended for wild-fowl shooting on the lochs will be found the most efficient. A gun of this description ought to carry No. 5, or even 4, with the same regularity as a common gun would No. 7. Some fire very large shot among the birds, when they rise, in order to disperse them: this may often succeed, but it is a most unsportsman-like proceeding. The plan I always adopt is, first to select my ground for the evening, taking care that it is full of hillocks: grouse have a great liking to them, and when thus concealed their flights are much shorter. I then commence ranging my other ground as described; and when I get a shot, although the pack should rise at some distance, I select one of the leaders; and if it drop, the pack is far more likely to break, and the nearer birds are left for the second barrel.

Always cross the dog a good way ahead when he points, and cock both barrels; it is impossible to bring down your birds in crack style otherwise. Unless shooting in company, I generally have my gun cocked, and held ready to fire, when walking over ground where there is any likelihood of birds rising. This I only recommend to the experienced sportsman.

Never increase the size of your shot when the birds are wild, *unless with a larger gun.* Those who object to this additional weight, or who give their gun to be carried by a servant, will make but poor work at this season, as many of the best chances rise without a point at all. Stick to the last to scattered birds: one broken pack at this time is worth a dozen others.

About an hour before dusk, be upon the hillocks with your most experienced pointers: if they have been accustomed to grouse-shooting at the end of the season, they will hunt round them with the greatest caution; and when they wind birds, if ever so slightly, will point and look for your approach. Suppose your dog, statue-like, on one of the hillocks,—watch the direction of his nose, walk rapidly and noiselessly round in the opposite direction, as it were to meet his point, and you will most probably come upon the birds within fair distance. Should the hillock be steep, and only about a gunshot in height, walk straight over the top; and if the grouse be, as is most probable, on the side or at the bottom, you are certain of a tolerable shot. Should you have broken any packs in the morning, and driven them here, you are very likely to get some excellent chances.

As the shades of evening close upon you, the birds will lie much better: many a capital shot have I got when I could scarcely see them. A very indistinct view of his object is quite enough for a good snap-shot who is accustomed to his gun; and I would not guarantee the success of any other when the season is advanced. In fact, you must be prepared for every shot being a snap at the beginning of the day, and many at the end. By always following the above directions, I scarcely ever, to the end of the season, came home with less than two or three brace after a few hours' shooting, upon a moor where I used, in August, to average from fifteen to twenty in a whole day.

When a moor is regularly shot over, and the large packs thinned, grouse are less apt to flock early, which is often occasioned by several large packs joining company. Late in the season, before they are tamed by a frost, a windy day generally produces the heaviest game-bag to a good quick shot. When his dog points, the sportsman has generally a shrewd idea where to expect the pack, as they collect behind rocks and hillocks, most frequently on the lee side. They keep all together, so there is no danger of stragglers ; and as they do not hear so well in windy weather, he may often pop upon them close enough for a capital right-and-left.

An indifferent or poking shot should choose a sunny calm day at this time of the year ; for although birds rise at a longer distance, yet their flight is so much slower than during a breeze of wind, that the length of the shot *to him*, in both cases, would most likely be pretty much upon a par. Added to which, in windy weather, they are apt to fly as twisting and irregular as snipe.

In a breezy day, never range near those parts of your marches where the wind strikes fair from your own to the adjoining moor. If you do, most of the birds will fly out of your bounds, notwithstanding every effort to intercept them.

The Perthshire grouse are much smaller and darker in colour than those of Argyleshire. The West Highlander is of a beautiful rich red, and very large. Grouse are never so plentiful on the west coast, from the wet springs addling so many of the eggs. This deficiency in *quantity* is the reason of the superior *quality* of the Argyleshire birds,—it being a never-failing rule that, when ground is over-stocked, the creatures deteriorate. In the low corn districts, such as Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and the Border counties, the grouse are a very light brown, borrowing a tint from the stubbles on which they delight to feed. Snaring grouse in these counties on the "stooks," with wire no thicker than horse-hair, is a very common way of poaching. Forty or fifty are often taken at a time, during the period between the corn being cut and carried. All these birds are so light in the colour as more nearly to resemble partridges. But let us take the mountain from top to bottom, and admire the wondrous care of the Divine appointments. The ptarmigan, the colour of its snowy summit in the winter time, and of the grey granite rock in summer; the grouse, lower down, exactly like its own red-brown heather in the autumn; while the partridge,[1] which subsists upon the little patch of corn that skirts the moor, has the yellower shade of the stubble on its wing.

As the nights grow long, grouse take a far fuller evening than morning feed. In mid-winter their crops at dusk are as hard as drums. They seldom fill them in the mornings then. Black-game also often content themselves with heather at this time, from scarcity of other food. Late in the year, both these birds sit best when evening feed begins.

No man ought to beat the same range oftener than twice a-week, as packs of grouse, after being dispersed, seldom all collect in the evening like partridges, but are often some time before they gather: the best days are those with a warm sun and light breeze. Cold wind and rain, after October, make them flock; and it is of no use to disturb them till it is fine again, when they disperse. You may expect good sport after the first black frost. A sort of lethargy seems to come over the birds: I have seen several in a day standing up, without an attempt at concealment, within forty yards—a rare opportunity for poachers and bad shots.

Many suppose that grouse change their ground with the changes of weather, and even lay down rules what parts of the mountain they frequent according to its variations. I have watched them narrowly for many years, and am firmly of opinion that they only shift to the longest heather on the lee side of any knolls near their usual haunts, when they want shelter from the sun, wind, or rain. When they become strong on the wing, and the weather is cold or boisterous, they will shift from one mountain-face to its opposite counterpart, to avoid the cold and take advantage of the sunshine, provided the distance does not much exceed their ordinary flight. This, I think, they never *willingly* do at the beginning of a season. I have likewise heard it asserted that grouse descend the hills to feed: this I also believe to be erroneous; and have no doubt that, at feeding-times, they only move to the first short sweet patch of young heather, the tender tops of which form their chief food during a great part of the year—except, indeed, in winter, when many of them come down to lower ground than they ever frequent at other times. The young poults eat the seeds of the various grasses and weeds that grow in the moors, and are particularly fond of sorrel. At the hatching-time, the hen devours quantities of earth-worms with great avidity.

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[1] These moor partridges, which spend much of their time in the heather, are of a darker colour than those of the Lowlands.

We hear many complaints from those who rent shootings about the scarcity of grouse. Plenty of absurd reasons are given for the decrease, and with some plausibility much blame is laid on the greed of stock-farmers. Having farmed the chief hill of my Mull shootings for the benefit of the game, I have some right to speak from experience. My conviction is, that though needy, ignorant creatures, *near the end of their lease*, may sometimes overstock their ground, no enterprising farmers would do so. They are well aware that fewer good stock pay better than a greater number of bad, besides having the ground in finer order for next year. All animals, and fish too, either die or grow weedy when overstocked. Many of our modern deer-forests are ruined by overstocking, but sportsmen often care more for the number of shots than the quality of the deer. This won't suit the farmer's book on market-day, quality always paying better than quantity on the average.

When I rented the grouse-shooting on Kilmun hills, it was a curious but well-established fact, that if ten sheep more than the ground could keep were put on, the supernumerary ten were sure to die. The general rule, however, is, that they grow weak and deteriorate year by year, until the farmer alters his system. Any really able hill-farmer would rather understock than overstock his hills. This has always been my own plan, and I find my account in it.

In former years, when there were more black cattle and fewer sheep, no doubt grouse were far less disturbed and injured by stock; but so long as these nurseries for grouse, the deer-forests, continue in such vogue, the superseding of black cattle by sheep is in part atoned for. Had the grouse-grumblers complained that Highland farmers now keep more sheep and fewer black cattle than they formerly did, there would have been truth in the grievance.

If it is maintained that the increasing flocks of sheep, like locusts, consume the food formerly allowed to the grouse, and thereby starve them out, I must own I can hardly reconcile this view of the matter with the facts I am about to state: 1st, No one will deny that the heather on the West Highland coast of Scotland is quite as good and luxuriant as that of the north or centre. 2d, The average sheep-stock of the three districts is pretty much upon a par—that is to say, the complement of sheep upon every hill is what that hill will support without detriment to the stock. Now, every grouse sportsman knows that the grouse in the north or centre Highlands of Scotland are immensely more numerous than in the watery west. To put it in another form,—a crack shot in the north, or in Perthshire, will sometimes bag from 150 to 200 brace. On our best-protected and best-managed moors in the West Highlands, an equally good shot will seldom score as high as fifty brace under every advantage. Now, may I ask what is the reason that the birds are so much more numerous in one part of the kingdom than in the other? It is not the want of food in the West Highlands; there is abundance of heath to raise and support three times the head of game, if the climate would only allow it. Protect as strictly as possible, and kill every rapacious bird and beast on the ground, there never could be half as many grouse reared in the west as in the north or centre Highlands; and the reason is, the humid climate prevents it.

When I rented Sonachan moors (about 8000 acres of as beautiful heather as ever man stepped upon), I engaged a game-protector, who for many years had served two as experienced and persevering grouse-shooters as any in the north. This man came to me shortly before the 12th of August. He was amazingly charmed with the look of his new hills, and could not be persuaded that there were comparatively few birds on them. After the first day's shooting, his disgust was extreme. Standing on a commanding "knowe" at the close of our weary day, and sweeping his brawny arm in the direction of our well-travelled beat, "Weel, sir, if ye had sic fine feeding and breeding ground in the north, ony gentleman that could shoot and walk as ye've done the day wad kill his 150 brace, and no mistake."

Lessees of shootings are loud in their complaints of heather-burning—and with reason. Many of them paying high rents, and for short leases, their sport, during the whole term of their occupancy, may be quite ruined by reckless burning. Any good sportsman, however, ought to be aware that, if a moor was left to its natural unburnt luxuriance, the birds would be very apt to leave it for ground that had been burned. I once took a very good moor in Perthshire for five years. On my first arrival, one of the sheep-farmers had just consumed a long stretch of fine blooming heather. I forgave him, on promise of never burning again, except under my keeper's directions. For three seasons there were few birds on that part of my beat; but afterwards they gradually returned, and on the last "twelfth" of my lease I killed considerably more than the half of my day's bag on and about that very burnt spot. Grouse will never eat old heather if they can get young—rank heather being used by them chiefly for shelter. Heather should always be burned in small patches, under the eye of a person thoroughly acquainted with the habits of grouse. If greedily done, however profitable it may prove to the sheep-farmer, it is ruinous for grouse. A moor treated in this judicious way will lose far fewer birds after a *dry* spring-burning; and when the heath sprouts again, they will be much more regularly distributed over the hills.

As to the grouse disease, when they are got up to the extent they were a few years since, an epidemic will be certain to thin them down, and may linger for years after. This, in a small way, often happens to hares, when they increase beyond a natural limit.

The worst evil grouse have to contend with, next to the disease, is the reclamation of waste lands. Black-game, however, have multiplied from this very cause, and only displaced the former tenants. Capercailzie also are now spreading far and wide in spite of little encouragement. Some years ago, two Perthshire proprietors told me they had killed nine and five in a day on their respective estates. The inroads of the cock of the wood are often not very welcome, as they drive off all other winged game and spoil the trees.

The ingenious devices of grouse-destroyers for the market are now met by equally able tactics on the part of modern moor-watchers. It is surprising how easily the least signs of netting, snaring, pinioning the poults, &c., &c., are detected by an energetic, conscientious head-keeper and his subs. One sympathises with the wonder of the French sportsman, when he demanded of the burly game-protector, " How it was possible to pickle these mountains?" "We pickle naething but sawmon here," was the grinning reply. "I know better; you peekle your deer and grouse as strongly as your salmon."

Each walked off in dudgeon, thinking the other was laughing at him. A still more unlucky confounding of pickles and preserves was made by one of the foreign deputation to the Seceding Assembly, who prayed that "Dr Chalmers might long be pickled for the Free Church." A keen opponent of that great man's ecclesiastical polity, who had often found his powerful appeals not very easy to stomach, musingly muttured, "Hech me! but a piece pickled Chammers wad be ill to disgeest."

BLACK-GAME.

Black-game do not pair like grouse; and shooting the hen and young birds at the beginning of the season is a simple business.[1] You have only to make yourself master of the places they frequent. They may always be found near a short thick rush, easily seen on the moor, the brown seeds of which form the principal food of the young packs. When your dogs point near these rushes, and especially if they "road," you may be almost sure of black-game. The old hen generally rises first, the young pack lying like stones: no birds are more easily shot.

The old cocks, even in August, are never very tame: for although, where the heather or rushes are long and rank, they may lie tolerably well at first, yet even then they are sure to rise very high, and take a long flight, generally quite beyond your beat: they are sometimes found singly; at others, in small flocks from six to ten. Their food on the moor consists of cranberries; another berry, found in mossy places, called in Scotland the "crawberry"; and the seed of the rush before-named.[1] They, being very strong on the wing, have not the same reason as the young packs for keeping near their food, and are often found far from it, especially in the heat of the day, shelter from the sun being their chief object. There can then be no better place to beat for them than among thick crops of bracken. Should you find them in such good cover, they will often give you a capital double shot.

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[1] Many gentlemen are now beginning to shoot the hens, observing the great increase of black-game and decrease of grouse in some districts. This may in part be attributed to the advance of cultivation; but I cannot help thinking the black-game have a good share in driving off the grouse—as I know of one instance where the former were killed off, and the latter again returned to their old haunts. I believe it is also more than suspected that the capercailzie, wherever they are introduced, have a great inclination to dispossess both. It is a curious fact that the young capercailzie thrive better under the foster-care of the grey-hen than if left to their natural protectress. When a capercailzie's eggs are discovered, they are divided among several grey-hens, whose nests the keepers search out for this purpose. The grey-hens, however, will not sit upon them unless some of their own eggs are also left. But when the young are hatched, they pay equal regard to both; and it is not until the capercailzie are fully grown that they drive away their step-mothers, who dread them as much as hawks.

As the season advances, black-game are the wildest of all birds. Fair open shooting at them is quite out of the question. As they seldom eat heather, their food on the moors soon becomes scarce; they then much more frequent the stubble-fields and copses by the hillsides. You may often see twenty or thirty feeding together on the sheaves, when the corn is first cut; but they are exceedingly alert for the approach of an enemy. I have seen them doing the farmer as much injury as so many barn-door fowls. Your best plan then is to hide yourself among the sheaves, and wait for their feeding-hours. If you are well concealed, and have selected the proper part of the field, you may have an opportunity of killing a brace sitting with your first barrel, and another bird with your second.

As the fields become bare, and the days shorten, they begin to feed three times—namely, at daybreak, at noon, and an hour before dusk. To get a shot then is much more difficult. I have made a hole in the stone walls which enclose most of the Highland fields, in order to shoot through it. I have also placed a bush on the top to screen myself when rising to fire;

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[1] I shot a fine old cock in August 1840, whose crop was full of a yellow flower of the dandelion kind, very common on the moors.

but they have such quick sight and acute hearing, both well exercised, when feeding on this dangerous ground, that I have found it a better plan not to attempt the sitting shot. My way is to crawl as near the place where they are feeding as possible, and make my attendant and one of the farm-servants enter at each end of the field opposite, and come leisurely down towards the birds; they are then almost sure to fly over your head, and give you an excellent double shot. Care must be taken, however, to ascertain that no sentinel is perched upon the wall, or on any high ground near, as there often is at the beginning of the feed. Should there be, wait patiently till he joins the flock. I have also, by this method, often got a capital chance at grouse feeding on the stubble, when returning home in the evening from shooting-ground on the Lammermoors and in Selkirkshire.

In a country where there are few corn-fields, you may get the best sport at old black-cocks by judiciously beating the plantations on the sides of the hills, especially if there are birch and alder in them, the tender tops of which form a great part of their winter food. They are still more likely to frequent these belts if juniper-bushes are near. But great caution is necessary in beating them. After quietly taking your station at the upper side, send your man, with an old and very steady pointer, to the under one; keep about thirty yards in advance of them. The man must remain outside the plantation, striking the trees with a stick, and making all the noise he can. The pointer must not, if possible, range out of his sight. You are thus pretty sure of the shot; but if your man beats through the belt, the birds are very likely either to fly straight forward, or out at the under side. Two brace of old cocks may be considered a good day's sport. If the plantations are very large, beat by sections in the same way.

Even in wood-cock shooting in *large covers,* unless there are a number of guns regularly placed between the beaters, more harm than good is often done by a noisy crowd. I never take more than one attendant, my retriever, and an old pointer. When I get a point, I choose the most open place, and send my man to strike the bush on the opposite side—employing my retriever to beat any very thick cover near. This, however, he is not allowed to do unless desired. Any man who adopts this plan will eventually be more successful than with beaters. More birds may, of course, be put up when a number of people are scouring the woods, but the shots will neither be so many nor so fair.

On no part of the island of Mull does grouse-shooting come up to a fair average; and although one may often get a good day at black-game in the beginning of the season, they are still far less plentiful than on the mainland, and soon seek shelter in the tangled woods, where most of the shots are unsatisfactory snaps. Towards the end of autumn these woods and covers are much frequented by old black-cocks. If there are many trees of any size among them, pretty fair chances may be obtained by means of a slow, steady dog. When scared by the dog, an old black-cock is very apt to take refuge in the first tall tree, making a kind of *coo*, which may easily betray his roost. The dog, meantime, patiently watches, and so engrosses the attention of the bird as often to procure a tolerable chance. It is a good deal like stalking capercailzie; and as morning and evening are the best times, one or two of these shy birds may be bagged before beginning or after finishing a regular day's range in open ground. You require a knowing dog, such as would make capital work *against wind* by footing the birds. I have had dogs so thoroughly up to this work as to make a steady point from the foot of the birds, then circle round for the wind, and thus place the game between themselves and me. A fair shot is the probable result of these clever tactics.

Black-game and grouse are easily tamed; ptarmigan, I believe, never. The keeper of the pheasantry at Rossdhu had a black-cock, a grouse, a partridge, and a pheasant confined

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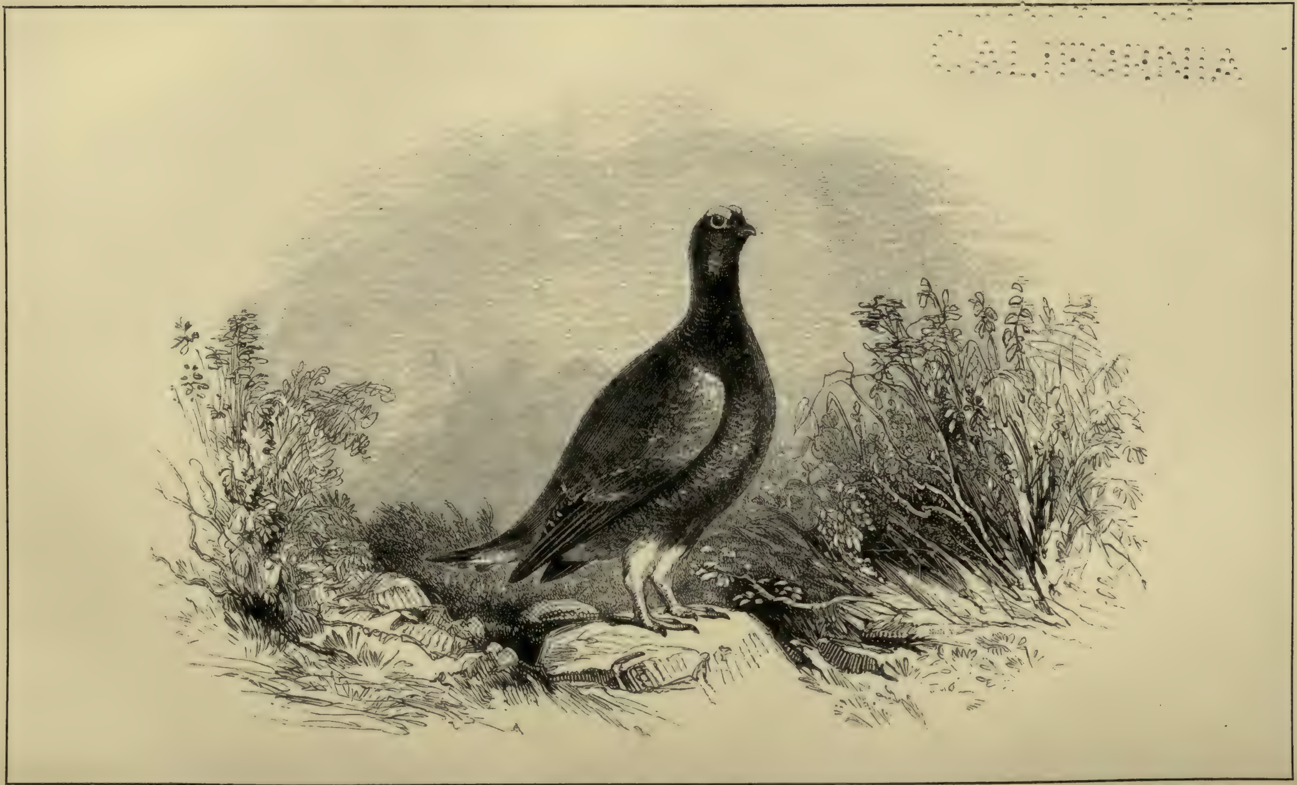

Hybrid between Grouse and Black-Game.

together. They agreed pretty well; and the grouse, being a hen, hatched two successive seasons. The first year the whole of this cross-breed died; but the next, with great care, a couple were reared. They were both cocks; and, when come to their full plumage in winter, were a blackish brown, something between the colour of a grouse and a black-cock. They were presented by my late father to the Glasgow Museums, where they may now be seen. I have given in the illustration an accurate likeness of that in the College Museum.

Before ending this subject, I may put gentlemen on their guard against two ways of poaching grouse and black-game, I believe not generally known. The first is, hunting the young packs, before the moors open, with a very active terrier or collie. If the dog understands the business, he will chop a great many in a day. On a moor in Roxburghshire, I saw a sheep-dog, accompanied by a young farmer, performing to admiration. I had the curiosity to watch their proceedings, until I saw the dog snap a young grouse quick as thought. The other plan is to set traps, on the peat-stacks, or in the green springs where the birds come to drink and to eat small insects. This last may be continued all the season. We often hear that these traps are set in the former case for hawks, and in the latter for carrion-crows. They may be, but any one who understands the habits of grouse and black-game knows what birds they are most likely to catch; and if this way of destroying vermin is persevered in by the keepers, "the laird" will soon begin to find his grouse *minus* their legs.

PTARMIGAN-SHOOTING.

It is worth while to make an excursion to the rocky haunts of the ptarmigan, if only for the splendid views they command, and the strange novelty of the scene. Ben Lomond, Ben Vein, Ben Voirla, and indeed all that lofty range in the west, are inhabited by these solitary denizens of the mountain-top. Except for this additional motive, however, not many sportsmen would be tempted to ascend them for the chance of the few shots they would be likely to obtain. Some of the mountains of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire are far easier of access, and the birds much more numerous: as many as ten or twelve brace may there be bagged in a day. Not having had the good fortune to shoot upon them, I can only speak from my experience in the West Highlands. The sportsman who climbs any of the mountains I have named, and falls in with the ptarmigan, cannot fail to observe how well it harmonises with the scene. Perched upon a ledge of the shelving rock, which it nearly resembles in colour, its wild look seems in contrast with the little dread it shows at the sight of man, who so seldom disturbs its craggy abode. They are even so stupid that, if stones are thrown over the pack, they will sometimes crouch down, in dread of their more common enemy, the eagle; and, bewildered at the sound of the gun, suffer themselves to be massacred one by one. This experiment, however, more often fails, when they all take wing together at the first stone; and far from being so slow as many suppose, they are quite as rapid in the air, or even more so, than grouse: they will also sometimes take as long flights, although their more common way is to fly round the angle of a rock or precipice, and immediately drop down.

I cannot better describe ptarmigan-shooting than by giving an account of the first day I ever enjoyed this sport, of which I have a most perfect recollection; and also of an expedition, in company with an English friend, now many years ago!

When fresh from school, the first year I took out a licence, I went on a grouse-shooting excursion soon after the 12th of August. Having slept at the nearest farmhouse to the ground, I started at daybreak for the base of "the mighty" Ben Voirla, where, I had been told, grouse were plentiful that year. My guide was the game-preserver, a reclaimed poacher, who had as quick an eye for a hare sitting, or a ptarmigan among the rocks, as ever peered from under a shaggy brow. After about three miles' very rough walking, we reached our destination. With eager hope I uncoupled my dogs, who soon came to a dead point; off went both barrels—it certainly was missing in good style!—not even a feather dropped for the exercise of my companion's ingenuity to hang a peg upon. All the excuse that his wit or wisdom could frame was—"You've made them leave that, at ony rate!" After two or three *equally successful* points, I began to wish myself well out of it; and, looking up to the stupendous mountain, asked if there was any chance of finding ptarmigan should we climb it. Having small hopes of my performance on wing, and knowing, from experience, that a sitting shot might thus be obtained, he caught at the plan, and we commenced our steep and toilsome ascent. An hour and a half brought us to the first shoulder of the hill, when all of a sudden he stopped, eagerness in every feature, and, pointing in the direction of a large rock, said—"If it wasna that I thocht it ower low, I would tak' my oath that thing on the tap o' the rock is a ptarmigan." I now walked first, and, ducking down into a ravine, came out about sixty yards from our object. Immediately it took wing, and my gun was at the same moment discharged, with, I must confess, scarcely an attempt at aim. To my inexpressible delight, the bird dropped. Heedless of spoiling my dogs, I rushed up, and seized my prize. After carefully wrapping its broken wing in tow, to prevent the blood from soiling the feathers, and giving it in charge to my sharp-sighted friend, I proceeded for a fresh search.

My utmost hope now was to make out the brace, but we toiled to the top of the mountain without seeing another bird. I had sufficient opportunity to admire the care and skill with which my guide scrutinised every likely spot: passing over the hanging cliffs by which we were surrounded with a very superficial glance, he directed his chief attention to the *cairns*, or heaps of rock and stone scattered jaggedly about. All at once I felt his vice-like grasp upon my shoulder, the other hand pointing to one of these cairns not twenty yards off. I strained my eyes to the utmost, but could see nothing save the dull grey rock. His impatience grew extreme, and vented itself in loud whispers—"Shoot him sitting!" At last I caught sight of the bird, its head and tail carried low, and colour so like the jutting rock that it might well have been taken for one of the points—none but a practised eye could possibly have discovered it. With eagerness and trepidation my gun was raised—off went the shot,—up went the ptarmigan with a hoarse croak—a fine cock! My second barrel followed the example of the first. The bird flew rapidly round the precipice, and with it my last lingering hope! I saw the difficulty of finding them, and despaired of hitting even when found. So we retraced our steps with my solitary bird, which happily served to stop minute inquiries about the day's sport.

Some years elapsed before I again visited Ben Voirla, but in that time I had taken a leaf out of my instructor's book, and could also trust myself not to throw a chance away when the birds were discovered. I was now accompanied by a friend from the south—a very good shot, and particularly anxious to see and bring down a ptarmigan.

When we got to the foot of Ben Voirla, we found that there were two packs on what is called the second top, and were thus saved the trouble of scaling the highest. So, taking two young farmers as guides, we reached the ground after a stiff climb. On ranging one side of the mountain, just as we were turning round to the other, the dogs ran into a small pack, which jerked round an angle, and were out of sight in a moment. I knew their flight would probably be a short one, so began to look about with the utmost caution. My friend, quite a novice in this sport, had no idea of finding the game himself, and continued to hunt the dogs with great assiduity. We happened to be pretty near together when they again "poked up" a ptarmigan. Neither of us thought of each other, or the ordinary rules of shooting, but fired at once, and down came the bird. This was rather unsatisfactory, as the "honour and glory" belonged to neither. However, we determined it should not happen again. I described what places the birds were most likely to haunt, and cautioned against trusting to the dogs, which were quite unaccustomed to such ground; but finding my companion preferred his own plan, I left him, and commenced my slow and wary search. At last I caught sight of a ptarmigan upon the very ridge of the hill, about thirty yards above me. It was in the same crouching attitude before described, and, had I attempted to put it up, it would have dipped out of sight in an instant. I was therefore obliged to shoot it sitting. But the moment I fired, another flew straight over my head, his hoarse croak proclaiming the cock of the pack! I had a fair shot, and down he dropped. The first I killed being a hen, they made a capital pair for my collection.

I was now very anxious that my brother sportsman should have a good chance; and, joining company, we reconnoitred the ground on every side without success. Only one bird was put up out of all distance, which my friend determined to follow; so, agreeing to meet at the foot of the hill, we took different ranges. Fortune again declared in my favour; for, just as I was scrambling with hand and knee up a steep precipice, a pack of four rose upon the very top, and flew into mid-air, just giving me time to steady myself, cock my gun, and get a distant shot, when one of them dropped into the gulf below. I sent my guide to fetch it, which he accomplished with some difficulty; and then despatched him in quest of my less successful companion, with the injunction that, if he joined in pursuit of my game, the odds would be *three* to *one* in his favour.

I had scarcely got to the peak, where I thought it most probable my three fugitives would again take refuge, when I was overtaken by one of those bitter hail-showers which often fall on the mountains in early autumn; so, placing my gun in its waterproof cover, and my back, Fitz-James-like, against a rock, I impatiently hoped for the cessation of the storm. Scarcely had it begun to abate, when an alpine hare came curtseying past about eighty yards from my shelter, and then seated herself with equal grace,—as tempting a mark for a rifle as could possibly be placed. It was not to be resisted even with my small shot. So, slowly uncasing my gun, and taking *deadly* aim, I fired. Puss gave an active bound at this unlooked-for attack, and took her leave with far less ceremony than she made her *entrée*.

I had just reloaded, when my guide appeared with a breathless malediction on my gun. He had seen my friend going down the mountain, but quite beyond recall; and, when returning to me, had stumbled on the ptarmigan, most conspicuously perched on the top of a rock. He was in the act of taking his marks to know the place again, in the hope of finding me, when my shot abruptly put an end to his schemes. The birds were equally dissatisfied with the sound as their

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Ptarmigan in their usual attitude.

four-footed ally of the crags, and made the same use of their wings as she did of her legs. It was now late, but as the man had some idea of where they might be, I could not resist the temptation of giving them one more trial. We had almost given up hope, when they a third time rose, very wild, fully a hundred yards off, from a knoll of moss where they were feeding. My time was now "up," so I descended the mountain well pleased with my day's sport, notwithstanding the mishap at the end.

The woodcut represents a ptarmigan in its common attitude, cowering under shelter of a stone; the other is perched upon the top of a rock—an equally characteristic situation.

A PTARMIGAN DAY.

On the west coast of Scotland the very name ptarmigan implies loneliness and grandeur. In the north where, from the greater prevalence of green stony ground, the birds become far more numerous, and the hills that allure them are more easily climbed and travelled, the association of this lonely denizen of the rocks with our sterner scenery is to some extent weakened. But on the western chain of the Grampians the very mountains themselves would lose caste both in romance and sublimity were their summits deserted by the alpine grouse.

So inaccessible are the breeding-places of the white grouse in the Western Highlands of Scotland, and so scanty is the stock of this game, that, always excepting shepherds, few of the natives have seen, and some never even heard of, such a bird.

"Ptarmigan ground" is therefore a most appropriate title for the magnificent cluster of mountains at the head of Loch Lomond, where every bald and rugged peak, capped with snow or shrouded in mist for half the year, has always nevertheless a scanty sprinkling of these lovers of desolation and contemners of the storm.

In these regions the very valleys and thoroughfares are lonesome and dreary; and despite the crowd of summer tourists that throng its banks, the otter fearlessly threads the Falloch when travelling between Lochs Lomond and Dochart. Sometimes, when watching the twilight flight of ducks, I have been startled by his peculiarly modulated whistle in the still bends of the river; and an isolated rock close to the highway is known as the "otter's inn," from his resting a day there when changing his fishing-quarters.

The numerous detached heaps of rock and stone scattered along the hillsides, or grouped in fantastic outline on the brow, are each occupied by a family of discreet badgers, whose use-and-wont title is never disturbed, except when the mountain-fox in spring takes forcible possession of the lower cairns, where the abundant stock of blue hares affords her voracious litter an unfailing supply.

The great abundance of these blue hares frequently allures a pair of golden eagles from the opposite hills of Corrynge. They are the only ones of this district, and always choose for their eyrie some one or other of the cliffs between Glenfalloch and Balquhidder. The quietness and extent of the hunting-ground have also emboldened the peregrine to build yearly on the confines; while a male hen-harrier constantly swept over the heather during the last year of my lease.

Such are the wild fauna prowling over the rugged frontier of the Glenfalloch shootings, the background being filled up by the ptarmigan hills. They are four in number—Ben Duchray, Ben Oss, Ben Loy, and Ben Achly. The two centre ones are the "surest find," and generally have one or two packs of white grouse every good breeding year. For these few birds there is such an amount of rocky and (unless to an experienced hillman) dangerous ground to be searched, that even with trained ptarmigan dogs, and working them hard to boot, many an enthusiastic sportsman may return without having stumbled on a single bird all day.

Certainly it is not mere love of shooting that can give excitement or piquancy to a wearisome West Highland ptarmigan range. Strip it of its scenery, labour, difficulty, and it is nothing; but a few brace of ptarmigan, with these adjuncts thrown into the scale, would outweigh, with every true lover of Highland shooting, the heaviest game-bag gathered with little trouble, sometimes even with little fatigue.

To sally forth alone on a distant and toilsome ptarmigan expedition had a peculiar charm for me. One could thus realise a modicum of the self-reliant independence,—nay, even some of the endurance of hardship,—at once the unfailing characteristic and the boast of the rovers among the American backwoods.

Even a successful day at white grouse on the West Highland districts never produces an inconveniently heavy game-bag. An attendant, therefore, is little needed, except to give advice,—which a man who knows the nature and habits of this bird, has a quick and keen eye, and a brace of steady dogs used to the sport, is far better without.

In the year 1862 grouse had bred badly (owing to late snows) on the Kuron, the wild stretch of moorland I have just sketched, and which forms the principal range of the Glenfalloch shootings. My second son and I had good sport, however, on the two smaller beats, averaging from twenty to thirty brace a day during August and the first weeks of September. The weather also had been very propitious till then, when it broke, and a fair day was a rarity. Wishing to spare the Kuron, and having shot down the full complement that the other moors would bear, I had for a fortnight been looking wistfully towards the ptarmigan hills. Each morning they were enclosed with fogs, and the weather itself was aptly described by an old Highland "kimmer" as "shoory, shoory, shoory, an' rain between."

On the 11th September, a rather too clear morning determined me to risk my " ptarmigan day." I had at that time two excellent rock-dogs; one a black setter with indomitable pluck to search every stony cairn—his assistant an old pointer of famed pedigree, and staid as Ben Loy itself.

With a game-pouch slung over my shoulder and the trusty canine couple at heel, I left Glenfalloch door before eight o'clock. A short walk along the highroad leads to the rough steep path winding over the first height. Surrounded by natural strips of wood, and skirting the Kuron burn, whose dark and drumly linns raved from the rocky abyss, this track ended in the heathery morasses at the foot of the Kuron hill. Hitherto I had been threading the covert-haunts of roes and black-game, but now the route lay for eight long miles among the domains of grouse and deer.

Although the Kuron hill, from its very ruggedness, sometimes gave a short stretch of tolerably level walking, these eight miles of moorland were nevertheless one continued climb till they reached the base of Ben Loy. Sometimes a pack of grouse or a solitary old cock would rise within shot, but I prevented all unnecessary loading of the game-bag by carrying an empty gun.

The heather at last began to merge into green patches, and the granite boulders became more frequent. In place of starting up singly at intervals, the alpine hares showed in threes and fours on all the adjacent knolls; and in their midst was the fox's cairn, where the last spring litter had been destroyed.

Towering before me in solitary majesty, its crown of granite gleaming in the autumn sun, the sharp peaks and beetling scaurs of Ben Loy gave proof that the day's labour was only about to begin. The deceptive intervening heights and hollows made the mountain appear close before me, but there was still a good extent of ragged grass-ground between my standpoint and the first steep pull, which was really the base of the hill. This ground, blending into grass from heather, was a favourite resort of stray deer from the Black Mount Forest, so I took a resting survey, meaning to profit by it the next opportunity. There were only, however, a few scattered sheep on the sky-line, and a shepherd with his collie stealing quietly down the glen.

Not until the first shoulder of Ben Loy is surmounted can the ptarmigan ground be said to begin. The green plant, as necessary to the existence of white grouse as heather to the red, then shoots up among the incessant rock and stone,—some heaped into shapeless masses, forming gloomy caverns, but more often scattered regularly along the hill-face, like the handiwork of some primeval giant.

I had just loaded, and was about to release my dogs, when from a crag above I detected two small heads peering down at my proceedings. Glad that my four-footed pair were still coupled, and feeling confident that no birds but those I was in pursuit of would be found so high, I only waited to satisfy myself by the motion of one of them that the two dark knobs were birds' heads, when, taking sure marks, I stalked round the rocks and came in on the opposite side. To my dismay, a brace of golden plover, in happy security, were within twenty yards of my gun-muzzle! In place of stringing both sitting at one shot, with a contemptuous jerk I set free the dogs, when the plover flew screaming down the hill.

A few moments proved the prudence of this forbearance, whatever the motive; for Bob the setter had scarcely taken one sweep of the mountain-scaur, when he dropped into a dead set. The pointer was also statue-like in a moment; but ere I moved a step, a pack of seven ptarmigan rose out of reach, and skirted the bald hill-face straight forward. I was marking their course when the eighth sprang up, but, taking the opposite direction, crossed me a long side-chance. I fired; but, if struck, the rapid and determined flight round the steep angle of the cliffs gave no encouragement to pursue.

The line of the pack, however, was more easily traced and followed; for although the mountain was as thickly studded with stones as a well-macadamised highway, there were no precipices and even few hill-scaurs to contend with. Hunting my dogs in little circles—now on one side, then on the other—I yet trusted my own eyes quite as much as their noses, and took good care never to lose my bearings of the exact line of my game.

Calculating the ordinary flight of the white grouse, I had now reached the limit where it was probable the pack might plump down, when, raising my head from the scrutiny of a tempting cairn, I saw the farther peaks enveloped in dense mist, and at the rate it was driving onwards the whole range would also in no time be engulfed, making the solitary being on the blank mountain nearly as helpless as the sons of Egypt amid the thick darkness that "could be felt."

Facing about, I sped before the grim pursuer with the desperate haste of an Indian from a jungle-fire, and had just reached the trusty guidance of a well-known water-course, when suddenly a slight breeze on my face gave token that the wind had changed. Instead of rushing through the hill-trough, the fog, arrested in mid-course, was rolled into blacker masses, and slowly retreating, while blinks of sunlight regained possession of the murky crags.

Very soon the whole line of hills looked low and blue as before, and the mist disappeared as mysteriously as it came. The lost ground was quickly retraced; but I had scarcely reached the point where I was headed by the fog, when, casting my eyes over the heights above, there was the pack, some perched on the granite boulders and the rest on the ground, only a few gunshots off. The dogs were instantly "heeled in," and, slipping softly up, I was almost within reach when my game looked scared and flew. Only six, however, rose, and the seventh was no doubt in hiding among the stones. When laid on the scent, the dogs instantly stood firm, and at the same moment the ptarmigan flew, and was as quickly brought low.

The pack of six made straight for the first ground, and their pertinacious pursuer followed, in the hope that if he obtained a third meeting they ought to be less shy of his advances. The rocks between me and the hollow where they were feeding when first discovered were rather hurried over than hunted, but all my vigilance and the utmost pains of my careful dogs found no trace of them there. My plan, therefore, was to take a wide circling cast both up and down the hill, and, gradually contracting it, to leave "no stone unsearched" where they could possibly have hidden. I had barely reached the outermost, and what appeared to me the least attractive, disc of my circle, when the setter pitched sharply down with that self-satisfied look back to his master which says as plainly as words, "I have them now." On my getting to the dog's side, he rose and stepped briskly forward to the top of a mound, under which the six birds rose together. Two flew back again across the mountain, but four dashed downwards, making for the peak below. The whole lot were nearly out of reach, but I fired quick at the old cock of the four, when he dropped his legs and soon after towered and fell.

The three remaining birds being driven into lower and easier ground, there was every prospect, by following quickly, of soon coming on their traces again. After a flight, white grouse as well as red are much inclined to pitch down under what shepherds call "the snibs" (prominent points) of a hill. As soon, then, as I had descended to their line and given the dogs a fair wind, I began the quest of these excrescences, and very soon was cheered by both dogs drawing to a dead point. This time the game sprang fair, and I dropped one dead with my first barrel and hit another badly with the second.

The struck bird again dipped straight down-hill and settled on the lowest shoulder of the mountain, where I had the good hap to mark it; while the remaining one, flying high in a contrary direction, was of course given up. Having made out the exact group of rocks where the disabled bird had sought shelter, I coupled the dogs and set off down the steep. On the very brink of a crag, and beautifully placed for a sitting chance, I soon perceived a round grey ball. It was, however, so precisely similar to many of the small stones dotted about, that until the breeze ruffled a feather I could not make certain of my game. At once aware that if the bird was able to rise, it would dodge over the rocks without giving time even for a snap, I made all safe by a still poking shot.

By the downward course of the last-bagged birds, I again found myself below the rocky steeps of the mountain-face, but, being still pretty fresh, was tempted to try for new game on Ben Oss, instead of re-scaling Ben Loy after the remains of the scattered pack. The day was wearing on; having, however, two brace in the bag, I sat down by a spring, and shared my crust with the dogs in calm content.

Ben Oss, which, although fully as steep and rugged, is not nearly so high as Ben Loy, always harbours a pack or two of white grouse, where, from the nature and lie of the rocks, they are both more easily found and followed.

In order to spare my dogs unnecessary fatigue, I kept them on the couple until well into the ptarmigan feeding-ground; but just when I had gained the southern ridge of the mountain, and was about to commence the range, two beings came suddenly into view, so ludicrously out of keeping with the savage scene that the very dogs stared at them with wonder. There they were in bright scarlet, working amidst the desolation with their instruments at the Government survey. When, in reply to my query whether they had seen any ptarmigan, the Garibaldi apparition, with a decided Berkshire accent, described a large pack of grouse which they had "flushed among the 'eath," I turned sharply round, and was off in a moment.

Both sides of Ben Oss descend abruptly into rocky precipices. They can only be ranged to advantage, therefore, by keeping the crest of the hill, and inclining to either slope as the skill of the shooter suggests. Of course the game is easier found by the dogs on the windward side; but as all birds like shelter, a good and quick shot will get more, though not such fair chances, by hunting chiefly to leeward. On the present occasion a fair light breeze wafted along the mountain-top, equally favouring both ridges.

Carefully ranging the top, but always with a serpentine course first to one ridge then across to the other, I had nearly finished the search of the mountain from south to north ere I was rewarded by the statuesque profile of the pointer on the very summit of a crag, and at its base was the setter squatted firm, evidently close to his game. The birds rose from some rocks below the ridge, so when they darted over the precipice the chance was quick and difficult. One fell to the first shot, but the second was nearly out of reach. The pack only contained four; but as the remaining three skimmed round the northern bend of the hill into lower and smoother ground, I had little doubt of recovering them again.

On the flat where I had calculated, the pointer at once touched on the scent; but before he had time to settle, a brace of ptarmigan rose wild, and took a straight course for the adjoining mountain of Duchray. Confident of a shot at the third, I ran forward to where they had taken wing, but was again balked, for the setter came suddenly *down wind* on the other side, and poked up the bird at the very spot I had so hastily quitted! It laboured, however, being evidently touched by my second barrel in the preceding double shot; and, incapable of the daring flight of its companions, turned back on Ben Oss, and slunk into a "gully" close at hand. It was easily found—sprung at my feet, and dropped dead down the ravine.

The sun was now slanting behind the western hills, and, barring the short respite when "the hunter produced his scanty pittance at noon," I had walked hard since early morn. After so trying a day, three brace of ptarmigan on one's shoulder were not to be "made light of," so, turning my back on their mountains, I plodded the homeward ten-mile walk through green morass and over heathery brae, only reaching my own door when the beetle began to drone and the bat to fly.

A sprinkling of ptarmigan lingers on the crests of the higher mountains of Mull, but the packs are generally few in number, and difficult to find. Wishing to ascertain their winter food, we took advantage of a mild day one January, and wended our track to their desolate retreat of rock and snow. The only game-birds that cheered the steep ascent were a couple of woodcocks, flushed at our feet, and summarily cut down. A sharp frost had shortly before so concentrated these migrants on the lower slopes, that ten or twelve couple were only an average good day's sport. The open weather had again completely scattered them, and a few stray birds were all we might now expect.

The labour of finding ptarmigan was much increased by a light coating of snow which capped the peaks of Dundeveuch, and we were warily questing the hollow which separates the sister heights, when my old pointer Bob pulled up to a point. He immediately began to "road," and my companion, who was near him, spied the pair of birds crouched among the snow. The moment he faced them, both ptarmigan started on their pins, eyeing him curiously. He shot one, and the other flew round the peak. It was easily found again by the dog, and killed by myself. When returning, we stumbled on three more at feed on a lower spur of the mountain, but having already secured a pair of stuffed crops, left them for stock next season.

I inspected carefully the feeding of both these birds, and found that it consisted of the tiny leaves and stalks of an evergreen plant which grows only among the rocks on the hill-tops. The previous autumn I killed another ptarmigan after feed, and its crop also was charged with the very same food. No doubt this rock-plant is as necessary to the ptarmigan as heather to the grouse; and although both may occasionally vary their diet, yet without these staple nourishments they would never thrive, or even live.

THE ALPINE OR WHITE HARE,

SOMETIMES CALLED THE BLUE HARE.

THE white hare inhabits many of our mountains. It is not confined, like the ptarmigan, to the tops of the highest and most inaccessible, but, on the contrary, is often met with on grouse-shooting ranges, where there are few crags or rocks to be seen. I have frequently shot it on flats between the hills, where it had made its form like the common hare; and though I have more often moved it in rocky places—where it sometimes has its seat a considerable way under a stone—I do not think it ever burrows among them, as some suppose; for, although sore pressed, I have never seen it (except when hard hit) attempt to shelter itself, like a rabbit, in that way. Indeed there would be little occasion for this, as its speed is scarcely inferior to the hares of the wood or plain, and it evidently possesses more cunning. When first started, instead of running heedlessly forward, it makes a few corky bounds, then stops to listen—moving its ears about; and, if the danger is urgent, darts off at full speed, always with the settled purpose of reaching some high hill or craggy ravine. If not pressed, it springs along as if for amusement; but takes care never to give its enemy an advantage by loitering.

I put up one, on the 16th of March 1840, when inspecting the heather-burning on my moor, at Leny in Perthshire, which (contrary to their usual practice) kept watching, and allowed me several times to come within a hundred yards. I was at first surprised, but the explanation soon occurred to me that it had young ones in the heather. I had thus a good opportunity of noticing the commencement of its change of colour. The head was quite grey, and the back nearly so; which parts are the last to lose, as well as the first to put on, the summer dress. I shot one nearly in the same stage, on the 22d of November 1839. The only difference was, that the whole coat of the former appeared less pure. This is easily accounted for, as in winter the creature, though receiving a fresh accession of hair, loses none of the old, which also becomes white; whereas in spring it casts it all, like other animals. Thus, by a merciful provision, its winter covering is doubly thick; while at the same time, being the colour of snow (with which our hills are generally whitened at that time of year), it can more easily elude its numerous foes. The same remark applies to the ptarmigan.

I twice shot fine specimens of the alpine and common hare on the same day. The difference between them, when thus closely compared, was very perceptible. The head of the alpine was much rounder, which was rendered more obvious by the shortness of its ears. The scut was also ludicrously small; while the roundness of the body was increased by the soft and very thick coat of fur, which made that of the common hare appear hard and wiry. One of the alpine hares was shot on the 17th of September; there was not the least appearance of the change of colour. The other, shot on the 6th of October, had a few silver hairs about the toes. On the 11th I shot another which had the feet and half the hind legs white, and was a little silvered behind the ears. On the 2d of December I shot another couple: the lower part of the body and hind legs were like swan's down, the back and sides grizzled, and the only unchanged parts were the crown of the head and cheeks. The last day I went after them was on the

15th of December, when I wished to ascertain whether the change was quite complete. On that day I killed two hares and a leveret, and was astonished to find that one of the former was in the same stage as those shot on the 2d of December; while the change in the other hare and in the leveret was complete, except a shading of grey on the back, which is never purely white but in the depth of the *severest winters.*

Alpine.

Common.

During a mild winter, when the ground is free from snow, the white hare invariably chooses the thickest patch of heather it can find, as if aware of its conspicuous appearance; and to beat all the bushy tufts on the side and at the foot of rocky hills, at such a time, affords the best chance of a shot. The purity or dinginess of its colour is a true criterion of the severity or mildness of the season. If the winter is open, I have always remarked that the back and lower part of the ears retain a shade of the fawn-colour; if, on the contrary, there is much frost and snow, the whole fur of the hare is very bright and silvery, with scarcely a tint of brown. When started from its form, I have constantly observed that it never returns, evidently knowing that its refuge has been discovered. It will sometimes burrow in the snow, in order to scrape for food and avoid the cold wind, as well as for security. These burrows are not easily discovered by an unaccustomed eye; the hare runs round the place several times, which completely puzzles an observer, and then makes a bound over, without leaving any footmark to detect her retreat. It is hollowed out, like a mine, by the hare's scraping and breath, and the herbage beneath nibbled bare.

When deer-stalking in Glenartney in the autumn of 1850, I was quite amazed at the multitudes of alpine hares. They kept starting up on all sides, some as light-coloured as rabbits, and others so dark as to resemble little moving pieces of granite. I could only account for their numbers from the abundance of fine green food and the absence of sheep, which are as much avoided by hares as by deer, from their dirtying the ground with their tarry[1] fleeces.

An eyewitness, on whom I can depend, gave me a curious account of the tactics of a hill-hare, which completely baffled the tyrant of the rocks. Puss, as is her wont when chased by an eagle, sheltered herself under a stone. The eagle took post at a little distance, and watched long, exactly like a cat waiting for a mouse. Although her fierce foe was out of sight, the hare seemed to have a *mesmeric* knowledge of his vicinity, for she never would move so far from her hiding-place as to be taken by surprise. Several times she came out to feed, but the moment the eagle rose she was safe again. At last her pursuer got tired and flew away. The white hare has always a refuge of this kind where eagles haunt.

The brown hare is not on good terms with his mountain cousins. The latter have enormously increased, by the wholesale destruction of the larger vermin, such as eagles, wild-cats, martens, &c. They have completely dispossessed the common ones of those territories where they abound. Like the northern hordes, I rather think they owe possession of the land as much to their numbers as their courage, for the brown hare, although proverbially timid, is very pugnacious. I once saw a battle between two of them, which appeared exactly like monkeys sparring. On slipping cautiously forward to see what this Lilliputian fight could mean, I was much amused to find it was a couple of jack-hares, reared upon their hind legs, pummelling each other's heads and shoulders with right good will. The blows were sharp and true; and if all the old brown champions boxed the ears of their alpine kin to the same tune, it must have been no easy matter for the hillmen to make them sound a retreat.

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[1] Should anybody be disposed to call in question the correctness of this word, I beg to say my title to it is long use and wont: "Tarry woo' tarry woo'!—tarry woo' is ill to spin.'

Should an alpine hare be started at the base of a cairn, if unpursued she will most likely run up to a large piece of rock, and place her back against it, watching the motions of the enemy underneath. She will remain long in this position, quite still. If the sportsman leaves his attendant at the foot of the cairn, and, by taking a circuit, comes down above, there is no danger of the hare seeing him. The only difficulty is to find out *the* rock, among so many pretty much alike, especially as its shape from above is often very different from what it appeared below. To prevent mistakes, I generally directed my game-carrier to hold out his blue-bonnet in his right or left hand, to point out on which side of me the rock lay; but if it was directly below me, to place his bonnet on the ground. In a calm day I have sometimes taken off my shoes, to prevent the hare from hearing my steps, and very seldom failed to shoot her. This miniature stalking is within the reach of many grouse-shooters; and, by trying their skill at it when the birds grow wild, they may find out whether they have any turn either for wild-fowl or deer stalking.

When one of these hares is pursued by a collie or terrier, she will run round and round the hill, on her own track, trying to confound the scent, and, as a last resource, scuttle along a water-course, if there is one near.

The alpine hare is a good deal less than the common—shorter, and stouter made for its size; and its legs stronger, for climbing in rocky places. Its colour in summer is a blue fawn; and in winter the tips of the ears, which are much shorter than those of the common species, are jet-black.

WOODCOCKS AND SNIPES.

The habits of woodcocks and snipes cannot fail to interest every one who has opportunity for observing them. There is a method in their movements which arrests the attention of a naturalist; but unless he is a sportsman too, they are less apt than many other birds to come under his notice.

The first few woodcocks generally arrive about the beginning of October. Their approach is always made known by the red-wing, which bird one cannot help connecting with the woodcock, as guests who commonly arrive together, however unlike in other respects. When woodcocks first come, they keep to the open ground, taking refuge in brushwood, rushes, or heather. At this time they are constantly found and pointed on the moors; comparatively few frequent the coverts, at least in the daytime: towards dusk, I have seen them come down to the springs. The first frost, however, drives them to the woods, where the ground is of course less hard. Should the weather continue severe, many take refuge under thick hollies or junipers, especially where these bushes are surrounded by plashy ground. It is worth notice that if a woodcock is found at one of the covert springs about dusk in October, he is sure to be at the same place in the daytime when the frost sets in. Each bird has its own favourite evergreen retreat, which it does not abandon till the weather becomes open. A good beater well knows that this bush should be struck smartly on the opposite side from the gun, or the woodcock is warned, and flies away hidden by the boughs.

During a long-continued period of frost and snow, most of the woodcocks leave the inlands for the oak and larch belts on the coast, in order to feed upon the sea-worms within tide water-mark. This sea-ground, of course, is seldom much affected by frost, and is the last resource of the woodcock during a storm. In the severe winter of 1838-39, hardly a stray cock was to be found in the inland coverts after the first few weeks of hard frost. Numbers were seen dead and dying of starvation among the plantations which skirted the sea, even the sea-worm having failed about the end of that long-continued storm.

The passages of the woodcocks, either at evening flight, or from one part of a coppice to another, when flushed, seldom vary twenty yards. In beating *large* coverts, shots who are aware of this have a great advantage. After once seeing the bird fly, they can form a shrewd guess where to place themselves next time. By facing the beaters, and securing any opening that the cock may have skirted, they will rarely be disappointed, as every woodcock will be found next day at its former post, and take precisely its former course, *if sprung in the same direction.* Should the bush or tree be beaten on the opposite side to that of the day before, the woodcock has likewise a well-known flight the reverse way. So certain is this propensity, that, even in long narrow strips of plantation, every woodcock flies to the side (unless prevented by bungling irregular beating) a short time after being flushed—the sharp fliers a little farther on, and the tame proportionally nearer. The flight of both can be easily calculated: and if there are two pairs of experienced shots outside the wood, one pair for the wild and the other for the tame birds, scarcely any escape without being fired at.

There are, however, many plantations, and these often the most noted haunts of the woodcock, which it is impossible to beat by the above methods. Few sportsmen would even walk through some of our tangled coverts in the Highlands, and shooting is out of the question,—

> "Where, sunk in copse, your furthest glance
> Gains not the length of horseman's lance;
> And oft so steep, the foot is fain
> Assistance from the hand to gain."

It is in such places that cockers and springers are of *real service.* The woodcocks generally fly straight over the tops of the trees, and drop down near the opposite side of the covert. Sometimes they take the whole round, and pitch close to where they were sprung.

Should one of these large circular belts be placed on the steep side of a hill, there is a capital opportunity for taking a lesson in the tactics of this bird. By placing yourself upon an opposite knoll, every flushed woodcock is immediately seen, and his course traced without the possibility of subterfuge or evasion. Many sportsmen place a marker upon this point, and are thus directed to the very spot where all the sprung birds have pitched. But if they had the patience to watch a few times for themselves, they would be amply rewarded by insight into the manœuvres of this interesting visitant. If sprung fairly, most of the birds will top precisely the same trees, and fly past the same openings every time. Some will make it their rule to pitch down after taking one stretch across; others, by wheeling about, take two; while a few lazy ones may content themselves with a flight only half through the wood. If flushed a second time, however, their movements, *for that day*, are not so much to be depended on. Should the party of beaters be numerous and noisy, many of the woodcocks will drop down outside the covert, especially if much persecuted and driven about. Some sly old fellows try this ruse after their first flight. The sportsman, therefore, should always walk round the plantation outside before quitting it. But, as most of the birds will fly sharp, he must be prepared for snaps. The extreme regularity of the woodcock's flight has been proved to me, even after putting him up the second time. We flushed one in the Kilmun coverts, out of reach. He flew straight for a bit of marshy ground; some woodcutters were at work there, and prevented his settling. In a short time we noticed him come back, and light close to the same spot where he was first put up. He again rose wild; but my beater reminded me of the woodmen. So we stationed ourselves in the line of his return progress, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him, as we expected; and I shot him flying over my head.

In overgrown larch plantations, with long bare stems, it is impossible to fire too soon, as all the shots must be taken before the birds rise to the branches. If, on the contrary, the covert is low, the cock should be allowed to get among the tree-tops; and there will, most likely, be opening enough for a quick shot. Otherwise, pick a snap through the *thinnest* screen of tree-tops and branches. To do all this *mechanically* requires both self-command and long practice. Of course these remarks refer to large plantations, where there are no open spaces to take advantage of.

A few woodcocks remain to breed in this country; and nests of young are found, most seasons, in the heathery islands of Loch Lomond. When the summer is very warm, they, like the wild drakes, moult so severely as for a short time to be unable to fly. I have occasionally seen them in the twilight, after a calm, clear, summer day, chasing each other high in the air; making a piping noise not unlike the "blouting" of a mire-snipe. In former times, I never heard of their nests being discovered: so, most likely, our less sunny summers have induced a sprinkling of them to remain the whole year. I have in my collection a couple of woodcocks' eggs, found in Inchtavanach a few springs ago.

The evening flight of the woodcock is rather earlier than the wild duck's. The shrill chirp of the blackbird is a good signal when to expect them. This chirpy scream of the blackbird generally begins a little before dusk; the woodcocks fly about dusk, and the ducks a little after. In a good place for evening flight, you may generally secure four or five fair chances at woodcock. A few cocks come to the coverts again in March, immediately before taking their final departure. As the ground is then soft, and plenty of worms, &c., are to be found in every part of it, they are not so apt to frequent moist places, and may, in fact, be flushed in any part of the coppice. It is therefore scarcely worth while to beat for them.

Numbers of the mire-snipe breed among the heather on our moors, and afford no small amusement to the grouse-shooter. I have often bagged four or five couple in a day, when after grouse,—merely picking them up as they came in the way. The young are constantly met with in all stages of progress—from the downy ball of a few days old, to the scarcely fledged bird essaying its first tottering flight.

Jacks come in September, but are more local in their habits. They are found in considerable plenty on many of our more marshy moors. It is very amusing to witness the attempts of an indifferent shot at jack-snipes in such open ground. They are easily found by a good dog, as they have a strong scent; and, being close-lying birds, they generally spring within a yard of the sportsman's toes, who at last wishes his teasing game far enough, when a heroic jack doggedly offers another chance. A good shot will hit a jack even more certainly than a mire-snipe.

In bare ground, I have frequently noticed both mire and jack snipes squatted before my dog's nose. Once I plainly saw the point of a mire-snipe's bill stuck in the ground, ready to hoist him into the air. I watched narrowly, and, in taking wing, he used his long bill exactly as we would a walking-stick. Snipes have the same predilection for a particular spot as woodcocks. One severe winter my retriever sprang a mire-snipe out of a puddle, close to the Gala water. It flew across the stream, and I fractured the tip of its wing just when it reached the other side. It fell among thick furze, and we were unable to find it. Next day my retriever picked it up at the same ditch, unable to fly a yard. It could only have recrossed the Gala by swimming.

SEA-FOWL SHOOTING IN THE FIRTH OF FORTH.

We have long discovered two distinct and widely different classes amongst men who are fond of recreation with the gun. By far the most numerous type are mere shooting-machines, whose delight is a partridge or grouse *drive*, when the honours of the day are accorded to him who has the largest heap of dead birds at his feet. The plan of the campaign is simple enough. A row of guns take up a position under the mask of a wall, hedge, or drain, crossing the line where the driven birds are sure to fly. A large number of beaters are sent round to raise the game, which keep constantly dashing past, or over the heads of the sportsmen. When all the partridge or grouse are moved in one direction, the shooters wheel to the right about, and the flight is again driven from the opposite quarter. No doubt this requires good and very quick shooting, but so does the *battue* and the pigeon-trap; and for our own part, we see little difference in these three lazy and luxurious modes of bird-butchery.

The other class to whom we allude, so far as our own experience goes, are far less numerous. They have little sympathy with these massacres; and although regarding quick and true shooting as the first requisite, it is no more than the *first*—the A B C of sporting with the gun.

To feel the superiority of a man of this stamp, you require to see him out over a rugged country, where game is not over plentiful, and when the November blasts have made it wild and wary. The complete self-reliance, caution, and care with which he will give his beautifully trained dogs the benefit of all the best spots to harbour game; the knowing manner he will approach it when found; the masterly way he will spring the pack or covey to advantage; and the exquisitely quick and steady shooting—so essential when game is strong and shy—make an empty bag to a shooter with the above qualifications a rare event. It is evident, however, that none can possess them without long experience and acute observation, advantages which have most likely enticed the possessor into the tempting province of the naturalist. A new field has thus been opened up. The sportsman studies the nature and habits of the wild creatures of chase, not merely to get shots at them, but also for the pleasure derived from the study itself. In place of being confined to the shooting months, *his* sporting season comprises the whole year. The advent and departure of migrants; the discovery of a rare visitor, with perhaps the triumph of adding him to the museum; the inexpressible delight and excitement of a trip to the crags and cliffs of the ocean, swarming with their varieties of wild sea-birds, with wilder cries, are now objects of even greater interest than his most successful day among the grouse or the deer.

The time for studying the peculiar and individual characteristics of sea-fowl is the month of May. Not only are the birds tamer then, and their instincts more prominently brought out, but each species is decked in its most imposing and brightest attire. From a lightly-rigged yawl on a sunny May morning with a gentle breeze, the *coup d'œil* of a coast, well frequented by sea-birds, and in the neighbourhood of their breeding-rocks, is the most absorbing of all marine views. You see the countless array of guillemots, razor-bills, sea-parrots, cormorants, and grebes—some diving at your approach, others rising in your wake, numbers darting on wing, a fair though quick cross-shot, past the bow or stern of your trig little craft; an infinite variety of gulls, from the giant to the kittywake, flapping lazily over and around you, and the solan in the distance, just poising, then coming down prone like a meteor into the glancing wave, the dull thud of the plunge being heard at a mile's distance. Soaring among them from her secure nest among the most fearful of the beetling cliffs is the sooty raven, scarcely, however, to be distinguished but by her croak from a jackdaw; while the peregrine, also nidifying on a giddy point, and faring sumptuously on her sea neighbours, seems dwarfed to a merlin.

Amidst this magnificent but, to the uninitiated, chaotic panorama, we have placed the occupant of the picturesque fishing-boat, and will suppose him a keen sportsman just lapsing into the naturalist. Anxious for rare specimens, but totally bewildered, he turns helplessly to the boatmen, who overpower him, as the fowl dash past, with the coast slang nicknames—Marrots, Tommie Nories, Nettleducks, Coll-the-caunlewicks, Letter-o'-marques, &c.—until, perhaps, the day closes with a boat-load of trash, and only some distant random chances at the wilder, rarer, or more gorgeous treasures of the deep.

How vastly intensified in interest does this living sea become to the keen eye of an experienced sportsman who is at the same time an accomplished naturalist! Not only does he know each kind and genus by book, but, from an intimate knowledge of their habits and manners, and a quick eye kept in constant practice, can distinguish every variety at distances which (to a novice) appear impossible. He scans the sea with his telescope, detects at a glance the specimens he is in search of, and immediately decides upon the safest approach that offers a fair prospect of a successful shot. Should he secure the coveted object of pursuit, it is not alone its rarity or beauty which makes his heart to dance like his little shallop over the waves, but the associations sure to cling to it in future and far-distant years. To him each of those sea-birds that grace his museum suggests its own wild tale of grandeur or beauty. The beetling precipice, the gleaming, tranquil sea, the jutting headland, or booming, boundless old ocean, rise to his mind's eye, fresh and glorious, even by a passing glance at that little denizen of the deep.

The North Berwick fishermen had written to say that eiders were plentiful, and had begun to seek the nesting islands in the Firth. Accompanied by my eldest son, and armed with our shoulder duck-guns, we were next morning early afloat for a cruise in search of them. The day was bright, but the breeze perhaps rather too fresh to give us full advantage in manœuvring wild-fowl. We soon sighted several flocks of snowy drakes with their russet partners; but from bearing too eagerly down upon them, raised them all out of reach of even a cross-shot. Like all other game, wild-fowl have their fidgety moods, sometimes without any apparent cause. This morning, the eiders being shy and "fretty" on water, we ran down to the islet of Fiddery, hoping for a stalking-shot from the land. Although we expected any feeding or resting fowl would be moored in the sheltered bays, we first made sure of the exposed shore with our glasses, and then noiselessly and stealthily landed on it. Directly opposite was a tiny bay—a favourite haunt, with the wind in the quarter in which it then was. The approach was simple, and, to an experienced shot, certain. When I got to the top of the rock immediately above, as I expected there were about a dozen ducks and drakes diving and sporting in joyous security. A sheer descent of seventy yards rather cooled my eagerness to fire, well knowing that even with my trusty "Ross" gun this was a most uncertain shot. Choosing a fine drake, I fired, and he lay motionless on the water; but my second shot was not so fortunate, as the bird aimed at flew rapidly round the island with the rest.

The boatman soon fished up the dead bird, and we beat up against the wind, looking out for a fresh chance. I was not long in espying a solitary white speck in the direct line of the team I had shot at, which I at once suspected was my second-barrel bird. Getting well to windward, we carefully bore down, and the eider, although uneasy, allowed us to run within reach of a long shot, then heavily rose, and hanging against the wind, crossed our bow. We fired together. The bird dropped, and instantly dived, but soon rose again to the surface—dead.

We had now secured two splendid eider drakes, but to complete the case a brown mate was needed for each. Again I scanned the wide expanse of water with the telescope, and soon fixed it on a large bird in the smooth water near the mainland coast. "It's the loon, sir," shouts the boatman; "there's one of them has haunted these bays for the last fortnight." As I had no specimen yet, the Great Northern was a prize worth trying for. From their weakness in the air, and their amazing power in the water, grebes and divers are very unwilling to take wing, always preferring to baffle their foes in the element to which nature has so finely adapted them. The difficulty, therefore, of getting a shot consists in their jealousy of a close approach, and the power they all possess, by swimming very low, of slipping under water like magic.

The Great Northern is not only the most wary of the diving tribe, but his progress under water is as fast as that of some birds in the air, and the length of his dive often extends to a quarter of a mile. We therefore went to work very cautiously: first tacking about to windward for some time, to accustom the bird to the appearance of the boat, and then gently wearing her, we approached imperceptibly nearer and nearer. The loon was greedily feeding, and from the shortness of his dives, and the rapidity with which they succeeded each other, he had evidently an abundant feast. Crouching in the bow, with my gun at my shoulder, I was several times within long range; but either this quick-eyed grebe dipped down just as my finger touched the trigger, or his position was unfavourable for shot to penetrate the oily feathers. At last, however, I did get a fair chance at sixty yards, and the No. 3 dropped round him in perfect pattern. He was down in a twinkling, and did not show again for some time. We followed, but in vain, for each dive became longer the farther we pursued—and little did I think that this king of divers had his death-wound, and would yet be mine. Two days after, some poor fishermen found him dead; and when he was skinned, it was discovered that a No. 3 pellet had passed through one side of the head, and lodged above the eye on the other.

The chase after the Great Northern Diver had taken us out to sea again, and brought us nearly opposite the second islet of the group, named "The Lamb." The eastern rocks are a favourite stance of the great cormorant, or "scart," called by fishermen at the breeding season "Letter-o'-marques," from the white patches on the top of each thigh. On the pinnacle of one of these rocks, which rise abruptly out of the water like the Needles in the Isle of Wight, three were seated in state, sunning themselves luxuriously after their morning feed. There was little hope of a shot from the sea, but no difficulty in getting within seventy yards from the land. On gaining the rocks I had an interesting inspection of the trio, who were extending their long wings and preening their feathers in full enjoyment of the noonday sun.

Selecting the brightest-coloured of the group, I fired from a rest, and the bird dropped into the waves, struggled for an instant on the top, then recovered and plunged down, his companions meanwhile flying out to sea. The boat being at the other side of the island, was some time in coming round, and either from the roughness of the sea, or from the cormorant having found a hiding-place on the shore, we never saw it again.

During the remainder of the day we tried every device, both on land and water, to procure at least one female eider, but failed, neither of two very distant chances from the boat being successful.

Next morning, the breeze having died away into a dead calm, we were reduced to "wooden sails," a mode of progress and approach relished neither by boatmen nor sea-fowl. At every curl on the distant blue the former waved and whistled for a breeze, but all in vain. They were forced to bend their unwilling backs to a three-mile pull for another search of Fiddery, with the poor prospect of a random shot by the way.

The sight and sound of a row-boat always put wild-fowl on their guard, and generally stimulate them to be alert and uneasy; so, notwithstanding the frequent groups of eiders and scoters floating all round on the quiet sea, the dip of the oars scared each team far out of reach. Unfortunately, also, the large flock of male and female eiders had posted themselves *outside* the bays of Fiddery, beyond the reach of shot. As they were most unlikely to move when the water was so smooth, we had to change our tactics by taking post for a flying chance, while the boatmen pulled round to drive them, if possible, within range of our hiding-places.

A bluff of detached and jagged rock rising abruptly in the sea, a little to the west of the island, afforded me safe ambush, while my son succeeded equally well in securing himself among the rough stones of the Fiddery coast. We had thus a narrow sea between us, where the fowl, if judiciously flushed, would be very likely to pass within reach of either gun, when rounding the west corner of the island from its northern end, where they were now seated.

A few detached birds dashing past in mid-channel, and of course out of reach, showed that the fishermen had succeeded in their task. The main body soon followed this advanced-guard. They simultaneously took wing, but soon separated into three groups. Two of these kept the island side, but the third flew straight for my rock. With eager heart and ready weapon I waited until they skimmed overhead, a quick but fair chance. A female eider dropped on the water to my shot, but seeing she was only winged, I was taking aim with my second barrel when she dived, and did not rise again within range.

Bang! bang! from the islet. My telescope was instantly fixed on my son. He was wading into the sea, where I distinctly saw him pick up a dead bird. Our boatmen, who had been straining hard, now pulled up to my stance, and at the same time my son was making signs to me in a certain direction, so, instead of pursuing my winged duck, we obeyed his signal, and soon spied a solitary bird, which proved a female eider. Upon nearing her she dived, but being hard hit in the body, soon came to the surface again, when we made her safe by a shot.

This happy right-and-left having supplied a companion to each of the eider drakes, we triumphed in anticipation of our collection being adorned with these superb examples of natural history. Could I have foreseen that ere the day closed another of these much-admired eiders would have deprived me of a shot at the rarest sea-bird I ever detected in the Firth, I might not have regarded them so complacently.

Having landed to search one of the homeward islands, a male eider was asleep on a promontory which flanked a tiny bay. A ledge of rocks, parallel to both, made the stalk after fowl either in this creek or on the promontory very easy. Neglecting (contrary to my wont) to examine the bay, I gave my whole notice to the unsuspecting drake, struck him badly at the sitting shot, and brought him down dead with the other.

Before I could rise from my hiding, three little sea-fowl swam rapidly into view from the bay. They never saw me, and seeming more surprised than frightened, never attempted to fly. The leader had a hood like a hoopoe, and in the centre of the hood a white star,—the Hooded Merganser! It was a tempting and mortifying moment to watch the little trio, within such fair distance at first, quickly paddle out of reach long before I was "shotted."

Leaving the eider where he fell, we were soon in full chase; but the American strangers had, on second thoughts, betaken themselves to their wings, when I ran to warn the men to bring the boat, and I have never fallen in with this rare mergus before or since. When we returned to pick up the dead drake, the fishermen, far from sympathising with my chagrin at losing such a prize, were firmly convinced that the eider ought to be ample consolation, and was by far the more valuable "fule" of the two.

With the exception of the black guillemot, and the great cormorant when dignified by his credentials, my museum now contained all the native sea-birds of the Firth of Forth. A pair or two of these sable guillemots sometimes hatch on the Island of May, whose dizzy crags also afford a secure night-roost to the scart, while its boisterous sea-coves are the favourite retreat of the green cormorant or shag. The distance of "the May" from North Berwick is eight miles, but it is necessary to be cautious in crossing this channel in an open boat, as a little wind soon raises a heavy sea.

My usual skipper, Glass, being absent at the herring-fishing, we hired the most sea-worthy fishing-smack in the harbour, belonging to his late pupil and assistant Kelly. Although there were some ugly streamers, what seamen call a "dirty" or "dusty" sky, yet the west wind was gentle, and perfectly fair for our destination, the lighthouse of May.

Kelly's crew was made up of his father-in-law, an old whale-fisher, and a stout lad who seemed to have been nourished on tobacco and whisky. When the sail was hoisted outside the docks, with the soft west wind just strong enough to fill it, and the Bass and Tantallon spread before us, with all their romantic associations, one's spirit rose as in earlier days. Even our crew appeared to share the enthusiasm—not the less, perhaps, from the good supply of meat, drink, and tobacco. If I *did* catch Kelly casting a furtive glance now and then at the streaky horizon, he seemed ashamed of himself; as for the old whaler, he regarded sea, sky, wind, everything with utter contempt, except the provision-basket.

In sailing over to the May, the boat might have been freighted with the commoner kind of sea-birds, but we only shot a few for the boatmen. A pair of solans crossed the bow, when my son dropped both—a right-and-left shot—and they were cleverly netted as the boat sailed past. A third flew by the stern, which I killed, but being unwilling to lose time by tacking, we left it on the waves. We declined to shoot again at these geese, which may almost be termed private property.

The breeze had freshened, and the waves were high enough to make shooting difficult, and landsmen squeamish. The boat was, however, abreast of the south-west corner of the May, and we were about to hug the land in a search of the western rocks for cormorants and the black guillemot. The west wind, so friendly in the morning, was now a bitter foe, for it drove the surf upon the rocks in great booming billows, making it no easy task to discern the difference of sea-birds at any distance, and next to impossible to force the cormorants from the shelter of the caves. In a cavern less exposed to the rolling swell, a pair of shags were perched on a point of rock. The boatmen clapped their hands and shouted, but both birds dropped into the terrific boiling caldron below. They remained so long in this whirlpool that we fancied they had escaped out to sea. At last they emerged and took post on the same ledge. Kelly then threw a piece of wood at them. One dived, but the other flew out, and was shot by my son. As its neighbour did not show again in the cave, it no doubt escaped into the sea by a long underwater swim. The cormorant we secured was a male, in the richest green, with a spring tuft in perfection.

The black guillemot was not visible to-day, but a pair of peregrines flew out screaming from their eyrie, the sharp flicker of their wings contrasting with the solemn flap, flap of the sea-birds.

The ebbing tide made our landing on the May for a trial of the cormorant-roosts rather difficult. On our way we called at the lighthouse, and the keeper and his wife most civilly agreed to give us tea on our return from the rocks, and allowed us to eke it out by shooting a rabbit. A row of "Letter-o'-marques" were already drawn up on their night quarters. One of the nearest, decked in the most bright and varied colours, looked like their chief. Of course *he* was the target, but being fixed at far too long a range, dropped down the abyss with the rest, little inconvenienced by the No. 2. Had we not been so eager, another overlooked approach would have abridged the distance by thirty yards, when most likely this brilliant specimen would have been ours. The only resource now was to take post above the rocks, and await the return of our fugitives. As dusk was setting in, they soon began to cross backwards and forwards at long distance. Fearing that darkness would stop our shooting, we were forced to try these random chances, which were all shot-proof.

Seated at our snug meal in the lighthouse, Kelly appeared with rueful face. "The nicht," he said, "looked ugly: rain had set in, and they had much difficulty, from the surf and low tide, in getting our carpet-bags out of the boat." I suggested pulling her up on the beach, but Kelly shook his head. They could neither take her out of the water, nor come on shore themselves all night, lest she might be dashed in pieces. We therefore made the poor fellows as comfortable as we could by a bottle of whisky, some good table-beer, and an ample supply of food.

We begged our kind host to allow us to see the tower lighted. This was strictly against rules, but he at once agreed to let my son see the lights put out. As this ceremony took place at four in the morning, I was too sleepy to join it; but my son affirmed that a more startling and brilliant illumination he had never beheld.

A loud rap at six next morning, and Kelly's voice imploring us to leave our beds, roused me from a sound sleep. When the tide was full they had run the fishing-boat into a sheltered creek, but as it was ebbing fast we must embark in less than an hour, failing which the boat must be moved out to sea, and neither we nor our baggage might be able to get on board. Kelly added carelessly, but slyly, "There is a queer bird diving outside the creek where the boat is, that nane o' us kens what it is." This was a master-stroke. We were down in half the time stipulated, and immediately assured that the unknown was still at his post. I was completely puzzled. At first I fancied the bird a smew, but was corrected by the telescope. Cautiously shoving nearer and nearer with the boat-hook, the little diver at length began to sheer off. Now was the time to fire, and it lay dead to my son's shot—a black guillemot, but in the light speckled plumage of winter.

The sails were scarcely hoisted, when, in the distance, but flying towards us, I distinctly saw another of these guillemots, but this one was black as ebony. He crossed between us and the shore, about 300 yards from the boat. Both telescopes were fixed, if possible to mark him down. He soon plumped into the water, and every time the wave rose we had a full view of the black speck on his crest. The jumble of the sea made shooting uncertain, but I still preferred a long chance to the probability of flushing the bird out of reach by coming sharply down for a closer one. Kelly, as usual, steered to perfection, and brought our craft down abreast of the prize in the exact line I had pointed out. On the first wave lifting the black prince into view my son fired, but he took wing, and both of us shot at him flying. Kelly said he was hit, and soon his assertion was verified—the little bird rose in the air, wheeled, and fell dead in the sea.

These being the only pair of black guillemots seen, we were all (Kelly excepted) proportionably elated. The old whaler spun yarns about seals, white bears, walruses, and other polar wonders. The sea-urchin whiffed his pipe and grinned patronisingly. Our skipper, however, still peered stealthily to the west, and seemed unwilling to lose time by a tack after a group of eiders a little to the south. We were now in no mood to give in; so, having settled that I was to fire at the drakes and my son at the ducks, we ran past them at long range. He knocked over his bird, and I struck mine, which flew a little distance, and then dropped dead. The eider being also called the "St Cuthbert's Duck," we presented this case to my old and very dear friend, one of the ministers of St Cuthbert's. Of the former two cases, one is in my brother's collection at Rossdhu, the other in my own.

Under a rather stiff gale we recrossed the channel, but only when under the lee of the North Berwick coast did our captain's brow clear up. Well did this skilled boatman of the Firth know how suddenly the blast he had been dreading might, like Harpsdale's, come at last! With a quiet chuckle he muttered—"Noo, we're a' richt;" and joyously, not to say triumphantly, steered into port.

In variety both of shore-birds and water-fowl, the sea-coast far exceeds the fresh-water loch; and although, from the mask of sea-weed and shifting tides, the shots are more random and precarious than on fresh-water lochs, yet the sea-coast is always preferable to the wild-fowl shooter, as yielding more choice specimens, and far greater numbers of birds. For this reason, a hardy and intelligent sportsman-naturalist will uphold salt-water shooting as the most delightful, I may say instructive, of any.

From the dearth of shore insects, waders are rare in all fresh-water lochs; whereas, on one wild bit of coast flanking the Sound of Mull, I have counted, even in autumn, red and green shanks, turn-stones, knots, dunlins, sanderlings, curlews, oyster-catchers, herons, and the common sandpiper.

Although in open weather the fishing diver fares much better inland than the wader, still the supply of small fish is vastly inferior to the sea. The majority of these divers, therefore, keep to the market where the supply is best, and only some stray ones of certain species find their way to fresh water. The more common edible ducks are as fond of the green food of fresh lochs as they are of salt-water feeding, and some species of diving dabblers even prefer it. These last, being seldom out of condition, and excellent food, are much sought after by all wild-fowl sportsmen.

The staple supply of the inland lochs, such as dun-birds, tufted ducks, golden-eyes, teal, widgeon, and the common wild-duck, is to be found in still greater abundance on the salt water. Perhaps the most lacuscular is the tuft. Although hard weather regularly sends a good many female scaups to Lochs Lomond and Vennachar, the males seldom accompany them. I never knew a male scaup killed on either loch except one, and that was a bird of the year, in immature plumage. The old males, however, sometimes frequent fresh water *close to the sea.* I shot for my collection an old drake, in the finest plumage, on Duddingston Loch, near Edinburgh. This is curious, female scaups being so tame in fresh water as to be more easily stalked than most wild-fowl. Why, then, are their mates so shy of trusting themselves away from the sea?

The purely oceanic ducks, although flat-billed, are never good for the table, but most of them are beautiful creatures to stuff for a museum. As they can't rise *except against the wind,* when shooting them under canvas you must always beat to windward; they are thus forced to cross the bow or stern of your craft, and give a *side* shot. So intercepted, they are less willing to take wing out of reach.

THE BASS ROCK.

This singular cliff of the sea has been the subject of many pages and many prints; but no description can lessen the amazement felt on beholding it for the first time. I had been familiar with much of our sternest coast-scenery—had shot sea-fowl on the Clet of Caithness, and stalked seals under the savage and perpendicular rocks of Morayshire; but there is a grandeur about this solitary giant of the deep which is different from any of the wildest scenes I had gazed upon before.

When we near the Bass, the ochre-coloured lichen which covers many of the rocks, contrasted with the white guano of the sea-fowl, and the white feathers of the solans, has what painters call a "fine pictorial effect." But when the boatmen pull slowly under the beetling cliff, studded from top to bottom with rank upon rank of living fowl, one is rather paralysed than impressed with the stupendous scene.

At the time I was there, a raven's nest was fixed near the top of the western side. Three of the young, in appearance no bigger than blackbirds, were peering over the side. I could scarcely believe they were not jackdaws. The peregrine falcon had also built outside the tower, and was wheeling aloft in company with the geese. I pointed him out as a sparrow-hawk, and was equally astonished when assured by the old boatman that he was "the blue hunting hawk." His nest was afterwards harried by a boat's crew from North Berwick, who came for the purpose in the night. Well did I know the peregrine, and had often admired his graceful bearing among his native hills. The sable tenant of desolation was an equally familiar acquaintance; and that I should have so strangely mistaken both, was sufficient proof of the vast height to which I looked.

Intending to shoot some specimens, I had brought my duck-gun, and at the first shot killed a puffin or sea-parrot, called a "Tommy Norie" by the old sailor in command of our craft. These pretty birds are very shy, although a good many haunt the landing bay. They always lay their one egg out of sight and never upon the ledges of the rock. One or two were hatching in the holes of the prison where our fearless Reformer was confined: when peeping out with their quaint bills, they had an ancient look that reminded one of sturdy John, with his slouched hat, looking out of his loophole window.

The razor-bills are now scarce on the rock; they are more retired in their habits, and apt to conceal themselves in the clefts. I was fortunate in getting a chance at a very fine one flying past, and knocked him over. There are none of the small black guillemot on the Bass, although they sometimes hatch on the Island of May. The common kind, called by our boatmen "marrats," are very numerous. They are ranged along the cliffs like companies of soldiers, and half-a-dozen might often be strung at a shot. The kittiwakes are always perched at a good height upon a narrow ledge. I shot at one discharge a couple of these beautiful little gulls, which toppled almost into the boat. A few purple sandpipers were flitting from rock to rock at the base; I also slew a couple of them.

There is a long narrow cavern right through the island, which every year harbours a pair of small green cormorants or shags; but the great cormorant only frequents the Bass in winter. We rowed into this cave, and hallooed several times. Just when we had got to the point where a sulky rock barred our further progress, and had given up hope, out she flew over our heads, and within ten yards' distance. I stumbled, from the looming swell, in rising to fire, or I could easily have shot her. Having already killed a specimen, it was just as well the poor bird escaped.

We now landed at Tommy Norie bay, and ascended the rock. Rabbits had been introduced by the present tenant some years ago, and have increased to a great extent. They were popping in and out of Blackadder's cell—a most wretched hole, with a small aperture for a window. We were told, however, that when removed there, from one much more comfortable, his health had wonderfully recruited—a circumstance I could nowise attribute to any salubrity in the abode, but to the merciful care of God over His faithful servants.

The rabbits seemed also to have taken a great fancy to the old chapel. Several were dotting about inside among the nettles, and had no means of exit, as we stood at the door. Their only enemies here are the raven and the peregrine. We saw the bones of a guillemot, which the latter had lately picked. On the top was a colony of gulls. There were two pairs of the greater black-backed or giant gull, and several pairs of the herring-gull. We were fortunate in spying one of the nests of the giant with two eggs. The boatman assured us they were fresh, as three was the usual number. Shortly after, we detected a herring-gull's nest with the full complement. The old tar was more doubtful of *them*. We therefore took the whole lot to what they call "the Spring" (though one accustomed to the pure springs of the Highlands is loath to allow it the name); and old Jack was right, for the large gull's eggs sank like stones, while the herring-gull's rose up on end, but did not come to the top. We thus saw that they had been sat upon for some time, but not long enough to prevent them from being blown. There are one or two more of these wells, from half a foot to three feet deep, with soft oozy bottoms. They afford drink to a few sheep pastured upon the rock. At the fall of the year there were ten white-faced seven-month-old lambs put on, but the half died. Had they been the black-faced, and a little older, they would have thriven apace, as the grass is very nutritious, and there is fine shelter in the clefts from every winter storm, whatever its drift.

If the look-up was astounding, the look-down was appalling. I certainly felt little inclined to covet the esteemed post of cliffman; which office, the old sailor told me with no little pride, his father had held for thirty years. He had succeeded him for a few years; but gave it up, as he was too weak to throw the young solans clear of the rock into the sea beneath. To do this effectually requires a very powerful arm. Many years ago, an aspiring blacksmith, trusting to his ponderous strength, offered to descend the Bass Rock. The ropes were adjusted, and he was lowered over the first shelf. As soon as he caught sight of the blue sea, and the abyss between, he went raving mad, and would not move. The people in the boat below perceived his state, and made signs to let him down, which was done by main force. It took several men to hold him in the boat; but, in about a month, he regained his faculties. He is now an old man; but to this day has never spoken slightingly of a cliffman's duties, or volunteered his unsolicited services.

About sixty years ago, when Canty Bay was much infested by smugglers, there lived below Tantallon a family of the name of Kelly. They were men of great resolution and herculean strength. The old tar said he had seen one of them take a pipe of smuggled wine upon his knee and drink out of the "bung-hole." He was not at all pleased to see me smile at the relation of this feat. The grandson of this family had the reputation of being the best cliffman that ever descended the Bass. Upon one occasion he was searching above, and one of his uncles in the boat below: a very small pebble was dislodged near the top, and struck the uncle upon his thick sea-hat. It cut through the hat, stuck into his skull, and before they could row ashore he had nearly bled to death. The geese are sometimes maimed in the same way.

Adams, the renter of the Bass, was very dexterous in the management of the ropes above, which considerably lessens the risk of descent. There are regular periods in the year for this perilous work. The first search takes place at the beginning of summer, to gather the eggs of the guillemots, kittiwakes, &c.; and another in August, to collect the young gannets, which are stripped of their down, and then sold in the Edinburgh and other markets for sixpence apiece. The eggs of the gulls and kittiwakes are excellent; but those of the guillemots, razor-bills, and puffins are rank-tasted.

I was amused to see the high mark they set upon the "purple geese," or those which have speckled backs, in consequence of not having quite shed the brown feathers. They are about three years old, and the beauty of the bird is in exact ratio to the brown spots on its back. For my part, I thought the pure white much handsomer. To please the old boatman, I shot a "purple," as well as a snowy specimen to stuff, and another pure white bird for his feathers, to dress sea-flies. They are superior for this purpose even to those of a swan.

Numbers of gannets flitted past with billfuls of decayed sea-weed for building their nests. These were formed entirely of this material, as we ascertained from examining the habitations of the two colonies which have been obliged to nidify on the top of the rock, all the shelves and ledges on the face being forestalled. They were so tame at these two places as often to refuse to move until kicked off the nest. They then stood chattering with open bill, and if you attempted to touch them would inflict a severe bite. Their threatening attitudes were ludicrously pompous.

One year the whole west side of the rock was depopulated, from fishermen and others having shot them when they wandered up the Firth in August, after an unusually long-continued shoal of herrings. The manner of the solan's attack upon these shoals is very curious. From a height of fifty or sixty feet, he comes down into the deep head foremost, with the solidity of a stone. I have watched a dozen follow each other in regular succession—keeping as true time as the ticking of a clock. When they emerge, they don't repeat the operation for some time, and fly out of the water with a lazy lagging flap.

Gentlemen often practise rifle-shooting at the geese. The site of some of their exploits was pointed out. One inviting snip of rock juts out upon a line with the walls of the fortress, on which the riflemen take their station. They have seldom long to wait ere a gannet settles upon this point. It was called "Baird's shot," from some steady-handed Baird having frequently perforated his goose. Upon looking steadily at the distance, I could not reckon it more than seventy or eighty yards. Taking everything into consideration, the cool post of the shooter, and the fair position of his mark, a first-rate rifleman ought seldom to miss.

The only small birds I saw on the Bass were a couple of rock pipits, feeding among the withered sea-ware close to the landing bay. Their nest no doubt was near, and they had chosen a place to build it upon, which did not belie their name. Those inheritors of dilapidation and decay, the jackdaws, sum up the zoology I noticed on the Bass Rock. The old rampart walls and chapel had most likely tempted them over the sea from Tantallon Castle. Having satisfied my curiosity, and procured all the specimens I wanted, we hoisted our sail and steered for Canty Bay. Numbers of the common gull were flitting about us on our passage, although I had seen none on the Bass.

When stripping the solan of his best fly-feathers, old Jack remarked that the wing-pinions were excellent for writing-quills. He had often commissions from the village teachers in the neighbourhood for a supply. There was a good deal of oil about them, which the schoolmasters extract by cutting off the ends of the quills and soaking them in warm water. I took out my penknife and made one or two into toothpicks; upon which Jack assured me that I would find them "far praeferable to a prin" (pin).

There can scarcely be a more inviting resting-place than Canty Bay; a cheerful sunny beach of smoothest sand, enclosed by rising hillocks covered with wild-flowers; the bold ocean-waves rolling before, and the bolder ocean-rock in full view. I now joined our party there, who had been busy giving books, &c., among the few cottages which lie in one sheltered corner. A poor man, whom reason had left, lay basking on the grass with a number of children playing all round him. He seemed gentle and kind to *them*, though no others dared to interfere. Sorrow had left its deepest traces on his poor old mother's face. Suffering of many kinds met our eyes; and we were painfully impressed with the contrast between the outer forms of nature and these poor wrecks of humankind.

In consequence of a summons from Adams of the Bass Rock, I went down one morning in March by train to North Berwick, where he agreed to meet me, for a cruise in the Firth after the eider-ducks. Each year a few of these Norwegians remain among the rocky islets of the Forth for the purpose of incubation. On the Bass there was only one nest last season; but they are more apt to hatch on the rocks of "The Lamb" and "Fiddery," and even in the bluff headlands of the coast. Their nests are not easily found, especially as the duck is so close a sitter. As the eiders had not paired, I expected a good view of them swimming in small companies, and perhaps a chance shot at a drake from a large single gun I brought with me. The west wind scarcely dimpled the sea; so, with the exception of one long shot which did not touch, no eiders would allow a nearer approach than some hundred yards. The drakes had a singular appearance on wing—the upper half of their bodies snowy white, and the lower jet black. At the distance they rose, the division of colour looked pretty equal. I was delighted with a good sight of that beautiful creature the long-tailed duck. He was diving in the harbour, and is nicknamed "Coll-the-caunlewick" by the fishermen, on account of his cry. We passed a very wild flock or two of velvet-ducks, but I saw none of the common scoter. Crowds of dunlins and knots, collectively named "mussel-pickers" by Adams, were tripping upon many of the points.

The oyster-catchers ("sea-pyats") also held a meeting on the rocks of the Lamb. I was anxious to hear of the great northern diver, and one of our crew told me that he had sometimes seen it, and once fired a great many shots at a splendid "loon" without effect. The red-throated diver now and then rose near our boat, which he pointed out as a "gurl." The raven had shifted its quarters from the Bass to Fiddery, and, when nearing the islet, we noticed the pair flying across to the opposite shore. The nest was under a screen of rock immediately overhanging a perpendicular cliff. It was quite snug from the weather. Although we could not see into the nest, there were most likely eggs, as the raven lays so early. All winter, the great cormorant roosts at night upon the Bass. They were now in their superb breeding plumage, and, from the white patch of feathers on each thigh, they have obtained the flash name of the "Letter o' marque." The boatmen fancied the birds under three years, which had not this mark, a distinct species. We saw numbers flying backwards and forwards, or sitting patient upon a rock, imparting to it their own silent mournful character. Their credentials were quite apparent to the naked eye. The wind was in the wrong direction for landing, or I could easily have procured a "Letter-o'-marque" flying to its perch in the evening, as they had not yet abandoned their winter dormitory.

WILD-FOWL SHOOTING ON THE HIGHLAND LOCHS.

The exciting nature of winter shooting on one of our large Highland lochs, if well frequented by water-fowl, can hardly be conceived by a stranger to the sport. It, in fact, partakes so completely of the nature of deer-stalking, that a man who is an adept at the one would be sure, with a little practice, to be equally so at the other. I should have been astonished to find this amusement so little followed by gentlemen, had I not sometimes witnessed the bungling manner in which they set about it: it is, indeed, as rare to find a gentleman who knows anything of this sport as a rustic who has not a pretty good smattering of it. The reason is obvious. The squire, who may be a tolerable shot, is all eager anxiety until he can show off his right-and-left upon the devoted fowl; while the clod, having only his rusty single barrel to depend upon, and knowing that if the birds should rise, his chance is greatly lessened, uses all the brains of which he is master in order to get the sitting shot; and knowing also, from experience, that the nearer he gets to his game the better his chance, spares no trouble to come to close quarters. He will crawl for a hundred yards like a serpent, although he should be wet through, reckless of his trouble and discomfort if he succeed in his shot.

I shall now suppose the squire by the loch-side on a fine winter morning, dressed perhaps in a fantastic shooting-suit, with a Newfoundland retriever of sable hue. He sees a flock of fowl well pitched on the shore, which most likely have seen both him and his dog, and are quite upon their guard. He looks round for a few bushes to screen him *when near* the birds; and then, with a sort of half-crouching attitude, admirably imitated by his canine friend, advances upon his game. Unless the place is particularly adapted for a shot, the flock have probably seen him appearing and reappearing several times, and whenever he is sufficiently near to alarm them, fly up together, to his no small chagrin. But should he *by any chance* get near enough for a shot, his dog, not being thoroughly trained, will most likely either show itself, or begin whimpering when his master prepares to shoot, or, in short, do something which may spoil the sport; and even supposing the better alternative, that the sportsman should have no dog at all, and be within shot of his game, he will, in all probability, either poke his head over a bush when going to fire, or make a rustling when putting his gun through it, and so lose the sitting chance.

Now for the few hints I have to offer. It may be thought that none were wanting, after the subject of wild-fowl shooting has been so well and fully discussed by Colonel Hawker; but I have never seen any suggestions to show the beginner how to proceed in winter shooting on our large Highland lochs; and many a man may have it in his power to enjoy the recreation in this way, who has neither opportunity nor inclination to follow it in all its glory on the coast with a stanchion-gun and punt.

The man who engages in this sport must be of an athletic frame and hardy habits: he must not mind getting thoroughly wet, nor think of rheumatism while standing or sitting in clothes well soaked, perhaps for an hour at a time, watching fowl. As to waterproof boots, they are totally out of the question: the common dyker's boots would so impede your walking, and also be such a hindrance when crawling upon ducks or running upon divers, as considerably to lessen your chance; and the India-rubber boots would in no time become so perforated by briers and whins as to be of little more service than a worsted stocking. The most suitable dress is a light-brown duffel shooting-jacket and waistcoat, as near the shade of the ground and trees in the winter season as possible, your great object being to avoid the quick sight of the birds; shoes well studded with nails, like a deer-stalker's, to prevent slipping; and a drab-coloured waterproof cap. Should the weather be very cold, I sometimes put on two pairs of worsted stockings, but never attempt any protection from the wet.

If snow is on the ground, wear a white linen cover to your shooting-jacket, and another to your cap.

A gun suitable for this sport is indispensable. It certainly ought to be a double-barrel, and as large as you can readily manage; it must fit you to a nicety, and carry from an ounce and a half to an ounce and three-quarters of No. 3 or 4 shot (I prefer the latter), both very strong and regularly distributed. Its elevation must be most true; if anything, over-elevated. As to length of barrel, calibre, &c., every man will, of course, suit his own fancy, and give his directions accordingly. Should he not be *au fait* at this, by explaining the sort of gun he wants to any of the first-rate makers, he need not doubt their giving him satisfaction. Unless for geese or hoopers[1] (when,

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[1] Except in the hardest winters, geese of any description seldom pitch upon the Highland lochs.

In the winter of 1841, some flocks of the bean-goose appeared on Loch Lomond during the first storm. They remained about a week, and, when seen, were always feeding on the shores. Three of them my brother killed. I never knew this to occur before; for although wild geese have occasionally pitched for a short time, they always chose the deep inaccessible places of the loch, and, after resting for a few hours, took their departure without attempting to feed. I went to the loch shortly after the geese had left it, but the thaw unfortunately began the next day; and of the five days I remained, it rained nearly three. I, however, bagged thirty-eight head of wild-fowl, mallards, golden-eyes, dun-birds, widgeon, tufted and scaup ducks—my charge never exceeding 1¾ oz. of shot. It was a curious fact that there were fewer hoopers that winter than in many of far less severity. Scarcely any came to Loch Lomond at all, and I did not see one, of course, I would sacrifice my chance at other fowl), I never use any shot larger than No. 4, as a fair chance at a small bird like a teal might be missed with larger; and a man should not go alarming the whole shore, firing random shots at flocks of fowl nearly out of reach on the water.

Next in importance to the gun is a proper retriever.[1] The

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though I looked for them in all their most likely haunts. During the severe winter of 1837-38, not one wild goose of any description was seen, although there were numbers of the common wild swan, and a few of the black species, one of which was shot: so much for the uncertain movements of wild-fowl. All the finest birds are to be found in the largest flocks of wild-fowl: the smaller birds, being driven away, make little flocks of their own.

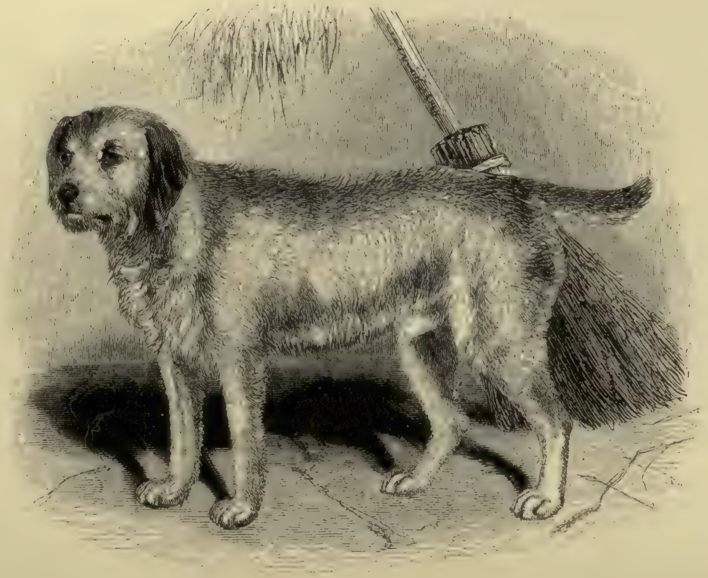
[1] My first attempts at shooting were in pursuit of wild-fowl when quite a boy, and I still consider it superior to any other sport. In these early days, however, I had no idea to what perfection a retriever might be trained; if the dog took the water well, and was close-mouthed, I expected no more. As I was always obliged to lead him by my side, he often spoiled my best chances, either by showing himself, or hampering me when crawling over difficult ground. I was at last so disgusted with these encumbrances that I generally dispensed with their services, and trusted to my own resources for recovering the killed and wounded. The consequence was, that the greater proportion of the latter always escaped, and unless the wind was favourable, not a few of the former were drifted away. On one occasion I was foolish enough to swim one hundred yards into the loch, in the middle of winter, after a golden-eye, and had some difficulty in regaining the land. I had watched it for some time, and at last succeeded in getting to the nearest point on the shore. The golden-eye, however, was diving a long shot off, as these shy birds not unfrequently do: without once considering that the wind was blowing strong from the shore, I fired and the bird dropped dead. To my great chagrin, it was blown rapidly out into the rough water. What was to be done? Had it been able to make the slightest effort to escape, I could have allowed it; but there it lay, still as a stone. So, throwing off my shooting-jacket and shoes, I plunged in, waded up to the neck, and struck out for my prey. By the time I reached the bird, it had floated fully a hundred yards; but getting its leg between my teeth, I wheeled about for the land. My difficulties now began, for the waves were very high, and dashed right into my face. Several times, during my slow progress, I determined to leave the golden-eye to its fate, and as often braced myself up again, unwilling to have so cold a bath for nothing. At last I neared the shore, got into calm water, and, after sounding once or twice, struck ground, and reached *terra firma* with my prize, the leg of which I had nearly bitten through during my exertions. It was an intensely cold day about the end of December, with frequent snow-showers; and had the golden-eye not been the most valued of the diving race, I should never have made such a fool of myself. I arrived at home quite benumbed, determining no more to act the part of a retriever.

Another stormy mid-winter day, a farmer sent to let us know that a flock of wild swans had appeared off the shore. My brother and I instantly started with our duck-guns. When we had reconnoitred with glasses from a rising ground, we

Newfoundland is not quite the thing: first, his black colour is against him — brown is much to be preferred; then, I should wish my dog occasionally to assist me in this inland shooting, by beating rushes or thick cover up creeks, where you may often plant yourself in an open situation for a shot, and your dog put up the fowl, which are almost certain to fly down past you. If you accustomed a Newfoundland to this, he might, from his strength and vivacity, learn the trick of breaking away when you did not wish him. The best and most efficient kind of dog for this work is a cross between a water-dog and large terrier — the terrier gives nose, and the water-dog coolness and steadiness. I should say that,

saw that the flock were resting some hundred yards from the land, but had little doubt, from the high wind, that they would soon seek its shelter. We accordingly chose different stations, and, crawling to them with the utmost caution, waited patiently for upwards of an hour. At last the swans, by imperceptible degrees, and much turning and wheeling, neared the shore opposite my brother; but the water being shallow, they began to feed as soon as their long necks could sound the bottom. He was thus forced to rush down to the edge, and take the distant shot. One lay badly wounded: had the wind been blowing towards the shore, the swan was so disabled that it could not have made head against it; but as it blew sideways, the creature managed to paddle itself out into the waves, every now and then uttering its wild piping cry. There was no boat nearer than a mile; we, however, set off at full speed, and, with a shock-headed urchin at the helm, launched into the deep. The wind was blowing a perfect gale, the waves lashing over, wetting us to the skin; and every time we changed our course, we were in danger of being swamped. We had almost given up hope, especially as the white foam of the bursting waves was so exactly like the object of our search as to prevent our distinguishing it at any distance, when the "gillie" at the helm sang out, "I hear him!" All eyes were strained in every direction, and the poor swan was at last seen rising over the billows like the spirit of the tempest. There was much difficulty, and some danger, in getting it safe on board; and in all probability we should never have perceived it, had it not betrayed itself by its dying song. My retriever would have recovered both these birds in five minutes, and there would have been no risk of his spoiling the shot beforehand.

My two youngest sons went to Islay in January 1880 for a few days' wild-sport. One of them knocked over two Bewick swans, right-and-left; while his brother, who chose the other end of the loch, had the good fortune to kill a third, about a hundred yards distant, with his rifle. These were their only chances at swans. They were the guests of Mr Campbell of Balinaby, a most kind and hospitable host—one of those tough sportsmen of the old school, who had in his youth killed a seal with a smooth bore. When it was being secured, another head peeped up, and was fairly hit by the second barrel; while both seals were got on board before sinking.



Retriever for Loch Shooting.

before you can procure one which upon trial may prove worth the great trouble of thoroughly training, you may have to destroy half-a-dozen. You should begin your training when the dog is *very young;* and if you find he is not turning out as you could wish, seal his fate at once. The dog you want must be mute as a badger, and cunning as a fox: he must be of a most docile and bidable disposition; the generality of this breed are so: they are also slow and heavy in their movements, and phlegmatic in their temper—great requisites; but when fowl are to be secured, you will find no want either of will or activity, on land or water. The accompanying illustration may serve to show the sort of dog I mean, being a likeness of the best I ever saw. He never gave a whimper, if ever so keen, and obeyed every signal I made with the hand. He would watch my motions at a distance, when crawling after wild-fowl, ready to start forward the moment I fired; and in no one instance did he spoil my shot. I may mention a proof of his sagacity. Having a couple of long shots across a pretty broad stream, I stopped a mallard with each barrel, but both were only wounded: I sent him across for the birds. He first attempted to bring them both, but one always struggled out of his mouth; he then dropped one, intending to bring the other—but whenever he attempted to cross to me, the bird left fluttered into the water; he immediately returned again, laid down the first on the shore, and recovered the other. The first now fluttered away, but he instantly secured it, and, standing over them both, seemed to cogitate for a moment; then, although on any other occasion he never ruffled a feather, he deliberately killed one, brought over the other, and then returned for the dead bird.

The only other essential to the sportsman is a glass. A pocket-telescope that will command two or three miles will be generally found quite large enough.

Having now equipped our wild-fowl shooter, we will again bring him to the shore. His first object should be to see his game without being seen himself, even if they are at too great a distance to show signs of alarm. To effect this, he must creep cautiously forward to the first point that will command a view of the shore for some distance; then, taking out his glass, he must reconnoitre it by inches, noticing every tuft of grass or stone, to which wild-fowl asleep often bear so close a resemblance that, except to a very quick eye, assisted by a glass, the difference is not perceptible. If the loch be well frequented, he will most likely first discover a flock of divers, but must not be in a hurry to pocket his glass until he has thoroughly inspected the shore, in case some more desirable fowl may be feeding or asleep upon it. I will suppose that he sees some objects that *may* be wild-fowl. Let him then immediately direct his glass to the very margin of the loch, to see if anything is moving there. Should he find it so, he may conclude that it is a flock of either ducks, widgeon, or teal; those first perceived resting on the shore, and the others feeding at the water's edge—of course not nearly so conspicuous.[1] If there is no motion at the margin of the loch, he must keep his glass fixed, and narrowly watch for some time, when, if what arrested his attention be wild-fowl asleep, they will, in all probability, betray themselves by raising a head or flapping a wing.

He must now take one or two large marks, that he will be sure to know again, as close to the birds as possible; and also another, about two or three hundred yards immediately above, farther inland. Having done this, let him take a very wide circle and come round upon his inland mark. He must now walk as if treading upon glass; the least rustle of a bough, or crack of a piece of rotten wood under his feet, may spoil all, especially if the weather be calm. Having got to about one hundred yards from where he supposes the birds to be, he will tell his retriever to lie down: the dog, if well trained, will at once do so, and never move. His master will then crawl forward until he gets the advantage of a bush or tuft of reeds, and then raise his head by inches to look through it for his other marks. Having seen them, he has got an idea where the birds are, and will, with the utmost caution, endeavour to catch sight of them. I will suppose him fortunate enough to do so, and that they are perfectly unconscious of his near approach. He must lower his head in the same cautious manner, and look for some refuge at a fair distance from the birds, through which he may fire the deadly sitting shot. After creeping serpent-like to this, he will again raise his head by hairbreadths, and, peeping through the bush or tuft, select the greatest number of birds in line; then drawing back a little, in order that his gun may be just clear of the bush for the second barrel, after having fired the first through it, will take sure aim at his selected victims. Should he unfortunately not find an opening to fire through, the only other alternative is by almost imperceptible degrees to raise his gun to the right of the bush, and close to it; but in doing this, the birds are much more likely to see him, and take wing. Never fire *over* the bush, as you are almost certain to be perceived whenever you raise your head: more good shots are lost to an experienced hand by a rapid jerk, not keeping a sufficient watch for stragglers, and over-anxiety to fire, than by any other way. When you have succeeded in getting the sitting shot, the fowl, especially if they have not seen from whence it comes, will rise perpendicularly in the air, and you are not unlikely to have a chance of knocking down a couple more with your second barrel; but if they rise wide, you must select the finest old mallard among them, or whatever suits your fancy.

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[1] Duck-shooting on rivers and streams is generally unsatisfactory—there are so many turnings and windings which prevent you from seeing the fowl until they are close at hand; also so many tiny bays and creeks, where they conceal themselves beyond the possibility of detection, until the whirr of their wings and the croak of the mallard betray their hiding-place. Unless the river be large and broad, even the most expert wild-fowl shooter must expect few heavy sitting shots, and content himself with the greater number being distant flying ones.

Directly upon hearing the report, your retriever will run to your assistance; and having secured your cripples, you will reload, and, taking out your glass, reconnoitre again; for though ducks, widgeon, &c., would fly out upon the loch at the report of your gun, yet the diver tribe, if there are only one or two together, are perhaps more likely to be under water than above when you fire: but more of them by-and-by.

Another invariable rule in crawling upon ducks is always, if possible, to get to leeward to them. If you have also a bright sun at your back, and in their eyes, your advantage is great. Never forget in your most exciting moments that their hearing is most acute. I have seen instances of this that I could hardly otherwise have credited. One day I got within about sixty yards of three ducks asleep upon the shore; the wind was blowing very strong, direct from me to them, a thick hedge forming my ambuscade. The ground was quite bare beyond this hedge, so I was obliged to take the distant shot through it. In making the attempt, I rustled one of the twigs—up went the three heads to the full stretch; but when I had remained quiet for about five minutes, they again placed their bills under their wings. Upon a second trial, the slight noise was unfortunately repeated: again the birds raised their heads; but this time they were much longer upon the stretch, and seemed more uneasy. Nothing now remained but to try again; my utmost caution, however, was unavailing—the birds rose like rockets. I never hesitate concealing myself to windward of the spot where I expect ducks to pitch, feeling confident that, unless I move, they will not find me out. I have often had them swimming within twenty-five yards of me, when I was waiting for three or four in line, the wind blowing direct from me to them, without perceiving by any signs their consciousness of an enemy's vicinity.

When the weather is very hard, and ducks are driven to the springy drains, a simple way of getting fair shots, but seldom practised, is *to make your man keep close to the drain,* and take your own place fifteen yards from it, and about forty in advance of him. The ducks will then rise nearly opposite to you. To walk along the drain is not a good plan, as they will generally rise either out of distance or at very long shots; and if you keep a little way off, they may not rise at all. When the loch is low, the sportsman may often get a capital shot at ducks the first warm sunny days in March, as they collect on the grassy places at the margin, to feed upon the insects brought into life by the genial heat.

But to return to our wild-fowl shooter, whom we left, glass in hand, looking out for divers. He sees a couple plying their vocation fifteen or twenty yards from the shore, about half a quarter of a mile from where he stands. He selects his vantage-ground as near as possible for a last look before commencing his attack. Having gained this, he makes his dog lie down, and peeps cautiously until he sees the birds—waits till they both dive together; then running forward whilst they are under water, again conceals himself, expecting their reappearance. The great difficulty is always to keep in view the exact spot where the birds come up: once lose sight of it, your progress is stopped, and, in recovering your advantage, the birds are almost certain to see you and fly. When within one race of the divers, cock both barrels, and as soon as they *together* disappear, run to the nearest point on the shore for a shot. If the day be calm, the rising bubbles will show where they are; you can then clap your gun to your shoulder, ready to fire. Always in such cases shoot on wing, and be sure to fire well forward. Should a diver only be winged, it is useless to tire your retriever in pursuit; but if he is at all struck about the legs also, a good dog should be able to secure him.

So much for the small morillon. The golden-eye is a much more artful bird, and requires more caution. If, without seeing an enemy, he is at all alarmed while diving near the shore, he will probably swim out to a considerable distance—reconnoitring all the time, and making a noise something like a single note of the hurdy-gurdy. You may perhaps expect his return and wait for him; but although he may remain about the same place, making these calls, and apparently careless, he is all the time very suspicious; and I only once or twice, in my whole experience, knew him return to the spot where he was first discovered. Should he get sight of you, there is no hope, even if he does not take wing, which he most likely will. The little morillon may return, if you think him worth waiting for. I have called this bird the morillon, although for nearly thirty years I have detected it to be the female golden-eye. Before making this discovery, I fancied the immature male golden-eye to be the female; and having sent one to be preserved in a case with an *old* male, was surprised to be told it was a *young* male. I then sent eight morillons for inspection, which all proved to be females. Mr Baker, the bird-fancier, told me there were two morillons in the Regent's Park in 1851, which for some years showed no signs of adopting the adult plumage of the golden-eye. No doubt they were females.

When several are diving together, you must get as near as possible without alarming them; and, selecting a couple who dive at the same moment, hoot away the others, who will be far out of reach before their companions come up. They will probably never miss them until they have taken two or three dives, thus giving you an opportunity of getting the shot, of which you would have a much worse chance while they were together.

In recommending this, be it observed, I am supposing the ground of difficult access; when favourable, even a novice should be able to get within a run of any number of fowl, without being seen by the most wary of the flock, and can then make his selection. For my own part, I hardly ever adopt this plan; but where the ground is bare and open, an unpractised wild-fowl shooter would stand no chance otherwise.

When the flock is large, it always puzzles a beginner to ascertain the length of time they are under water, in order to know what time he may *safely* allow for his last run, which in such a case must generally be a long one. The fowl are continually coming up and disappearing again, which confuses him; and *unless he knows the depth of the water*, the only way to find out how long they are under is to watch the most marked or detached of the flock, and then choose his devoted pair. *If the water is very shallow*, those below are sure to perceive the flurry made by their friends at the top, as soon as you commence your last run, and instantly join them in their retreat. In such cases it is always best to try for a distant sitting shot, from the nearest refuge you can safely reach, among as many as you can get in line. But by attempting this, there is always a risk of losing the chance altogether, and it should never be resorted to except under such circumstances, or with *dun-birds*, who keep more close together, and thus present a better opportunity for a heavy sitting shot than any other divers.

Of all wild-fowl, a flock of dun-birds is the most agreeable to the sportsman's eye. They are the most stupid of all the diver race: I have even seen them, after having been driven from their feeding-ground, return in the face of the shooter, who had only lain down, without any covering or concealment whatever: they have begun diving again within thirty yards, and of course given him an excellent shot. I never wish for assistance in manœuvring any other kind of water-fowl, but these may be herded like sheep; and if they are feeding on one side of a bay, you have only to conceal yourself at the other, and send your man round to where they are diving. They will most likely come straight towards you, and, again beginning to feed, will probably every five or ten minutes draw all together with their heads up. Now is your time to fire, if you have the good fortune to be within shot; but should you prefer two birds in the hand to waiting for their knitting together, you may have a capital right and left when they come up from diving. I, however, should be loath to lose the opportunity of the sitting shot.

But the case quite alters when dun-birds have been fired at once or twice. Like deer under similar circumstances, they become most wary and suspicious; and although, upon the first appearance of the flock, a novice may easily procure a heavy shot, yet, after they have been surprised by the leaden shower, the most dexterous wild-fowl stalker may often be baffled in his attempts to approach them.[1] This should make the owners of wild-fowl lochs most particular to keep all quiet near the feeding-ground of large flocks of fowl, but especially of the dun-birds.

I may advance another claim why the first arrival of dun-birds should not lightly be disturbed—viz., the supply of food they cast up for other wild-fowl. Widgeon and ducks feed upon the blades which float on the surface of the water, after the roots have been torn up from the bottom, nipped off, and devoured by the dun-birds. They are thus unwittingly made to minister to the wants of their poorer brethren. When, therefore, the sportsman sees a tempting flock of widgeon in attendance upon their purveyors, who have been scared away from the shore, to dive on a too distant shallow, it is of no use to wait for them; for, be the wind ever so keen, the widgeon will not leave the plentiful supply of grass food cast up by the diving birds. But with a cutting wind and no dun-birds to depend on for food, ducks, but especially widgeon, never try the patience long ere they seek the shelter of the shore.

There are many other divers that frequent our lochs, such as the tufted and scaup ducks, &c., but they may all be approached in the same way as the golden-eye and morillon;

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[1] When dun-birds have been so persecuted as to frighten them away to try fresh feeding-ground, they are again not difficult of approach until fired upon in heir new quarters, when they become wilder than ever.

none are so shy as the former.[1] Those that feed on fish, such as the goosander, speckled diver,[2] merganser, &c., require rather different tactics. To get a shot at any of these, you must watch which way they are feeding, and, taking your station somewhat in advance, wait until they pass you: they will not keep you long, as they are very rapid in their movements. Take care that the water is pretty deep where you place yourself, or they may dive at too great a distance from the shore for a shot; but after all, they are good for nothing but to be stuffed for a collection.

The only other bird that requires a separate notice is the mighty hooper, monarch of the flood. To get a shot at the wild swan is the great object of the sportsman's desire: he is not naturally so shy a bird as the wild duck, but still his long neck and acute sense of hearing render great caution necessary. If, as often happens, he is feeding along the shore, you have only to plant yourself in an advantageous situation a good way ahead, and it will not be long before he makes his appearance; but if he is feeding at the mouth of some brook or stream, you must crawl in the same way as when after wild ducks. Should you get within a distant shot of a hooper, and are not close to the water-side, instead of firing from where you are, rush down to the edge of the loch, and before the swan can take wing, you will have gained from ten to twenty yards upon him. When the thaw begins after very hard weather, they are almost sure to be feeding at the mouths of any mountain-burns that run into the loch. Should you see hoopers feeding greedily, nearly out of range of your gun, in place of taking the random shot, try to prevent their being disturbed, and return at dusk of evening or grey of morning, when they will most likely have come pretty close to the shore, especially if any little rivulets run into the loch near: this rule applies to most water-fowl. If a swan be alarmed by an enemy on shore, his wont is not to fly, but to swim majestically away.

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[1] I had once a good opportunity of contrasting the artful and suspicious nature of the golden-eye with that of the more confiding morillon. When shooting wild-fowl on the banks of the Teith, I discovered, with my glass, a golden-eye feeding at the top of a long creek, and a couple of morillons at the bottom where it joined the river. As they were at some distance from each other, it was impossible to keep an eye upon both. So knowing that if the golden-eye got a glimpse of me, he would not stay to take another, I was obliged to trust to the simplicity of the more social morillons. I got within a fair distance for my last run, when the morillons, who had caught a transient glance at my manœuvres, paid the compliment of giving me their undivided attention; but as they did not leave the ground, nor show any other sign of alarm, I was congratulating myself that all was safe. The moment, however, that the golden-eye came up from the dive, he perceived that the morillons were resting on their oars, and instantly was on his guard. It was most curious to see the cunning and tact of the creature, which I had every advantage for observing, as I was well concealed. He kept cruising about with outstretched neck, peering first on one side of the creek, then on the other, always selecting the best points of sight to halt and make his observations. Nor would he recommence his repast until the morillons had set him the example. And had I not known his usual precaution of making the first dive or two, after being scared, very short, he might even then have escaped.

[2] The black-throated diver is sometimes met with on our lochs. My brother shot a young one on Loch Lomond. I killed another bird of the year out of a flock of six, but unfortunately let off the old drake, a tree having intercepted my shot.

Widgeon and teal are approached in the same way as wild ducks, only the widgeon are less shy than the ducks, and the teal than the widgeon. You may sometimes, in calm weather, see widgeon in a large flock purring and whistling a couple of hundred yards from the shore; you need give yourself no trouble about them, as they will probably not leave their resting-place until they feed in the evening. Always try to get a heavy shot at widgeon, which, with a little patience, you may generally accomplish. Teal are usually in small flocks; so that if you can get two or three in line, you had better fire, for fear of losing the sitting chance altogether. I once killed six at a shot; but except when they collect in small ponds and drains about the loch-side, so good an opportunity seldom occurs. I have occasionally seen shovellers on our lochs, but only in the hardest winters. They resemble wild ducks in their habits: the only one I ever shot was among a flock of ducks.

Good sport need never be expected when the loch is large, as many of the fowl swim up creeks, and among the morasses in-shore, where it is difficult even to get a flying shot; while those that remain on the margin of the loch are so concealed by the bushes, &c., that it is quite impossible to see them. The lower the loch the better; at all events the shore should be clearly defined. At such times, wild-fowl have always favourite haunts for feeding and resting.

There is a common saying that specimens of all the different kinds of water-fowl which frequent the loch in winter present themselves during the harvest-moon. This is erroneous: for even the morillon, earliest of the diver tribe, seldom appears so soon; and the tufted and scaup ducks, dun-birds, &c., never until the winter sets in. Multitudes of wild ducks do come down from the moors during harvest to feed upon the corn-fields on the banks of some of the larger lochs, and, when the stubble becomes bare, return to the moor-lochs until these are frozen over, which again drives them back. This is the only foundation for the vulgar error. A day or two is generally sufficient to freeze over these little lochs, and their occupants then come down to the larger ones, the greater parts of which remain open long after the storm has set in. Now is the time for the wild-fowl shooter: if the ground is covered with snow, so much the better. The fowl are then in groups close to the shore, pinched with cold and hunger, seeking shelter and a scanty morsel. If at the same time it is windy, with drifts of snow, no weather can be more propitious for ducks, widgeon, teal, and all wild-fowl that feed at the margin. When the snow is falling thick and fast, a capital sitting shot may sometimes be obtained, though the ground be so bare as to offer no concealment. In most cases, however, it is best not to take the cover off your gun till the shower moderates a little, as snow is apt to penetrate and make it miss fire.

In open weather, the higher the wind the better, as it drives to the shore whatever fowl are upon the loch, although, until the frost sets in, they will be comparatively few.

The most auspicious weather for divers is one of those frosty days, accompanied by mist, when the loch is perfectly calm, and looks like a mirror dimmed by one's breath. You may then hear their plash in the water—sometimes even before they can be seen; and if care is taken to make no rustling among the bushes when they are above water, you have every prospect of a good chance. The smoothness of the surface and the mist make each bird appear twice as large as it is, which enables you much more easily to catch sight of them coming up from the dive. The mist is also an excellent shroud if the ground is open, without a tree or bush to hide behind when the birds are above water.

The wild-fowl shooter must never forget that the true proof of his skill consists in obtaining *sitting* shots, and stopping a number of fowl at one discharge; and, unless with divers, he must not think of a flying right-and-left.

Since writing this chapter I have been much struck by the contrast which this sport presents to the gloomy picture that we are generally accustomed to draw of our wintry weather, with its obstacles to outdoor recreations. Even Sir Walter Scott seems to have forgotten the resources which winter wild-fowling affords against indoor *ennui*. Had he taken counsel with his friend the elder Monkbarns, who was "an arrant fowler," and whose death I attribute less to the "cold caught in his vocation while shooting ducks in the swamp called Kittlefitting Moss," than to the bottle of brandy which he drank "that very night to keep the cold out of his stomach," he would have given us a more cheery side to the dark description of December which he draws in 'Marmion.' Far from welcoming the "busy day and social night" in the city, such weather would have at once allured me to the wildest shooting within my reach.

> "When dark December glooms the day,
> And takes our autumn joys away;
> When short and scant the sunbeam throws,
> Upon the weary waste of snows,
> A cold and profitless regard,
> Like patron on a needy bard;
> When silvan occupation's done,
> And o'er the chimney rests the gun,
> And hang, in idle trophy, near,
> The game-pouch, fishing-rod, and spear;
> When wiry terrier, rough and grim,
> And greyhound, with his length of limb,
> And pointer, now employed no more,
> Cumber our parlour's narrow floor;
> When in his stall the impatient steed
> Is long condemn'd to rest and feed;
> When from our snow-encircled home,
> Scarce cares the hardiest step to roam,
> Since path is none, save that to bring
> The needful water from the spring;
> When wrinkled news-page, thrice conn'd o'er,
> Beguiles the dreary hour no more,
> And darkling politician, cross'd,
> Inveighs against the lingering post,
> And answering housewife sore complains
> Of carriers' snow-impeded wains;—
> When such the country cheer, I come,
> Well pleased, to seek our city home;
> For converse, and for books, to change
> The Forest's melancholy range,
> And welcome, with renew'd delight,
> The busy day and social night."

DOGS FOR THE GUN.

My advice on the subject of dogs must begin with the caution never to lay too much stress on their general appearance. For my own part, I must confess that I am not very partial to the exceedingly fine-coated, silken-eared, tobacco-pipe-tailed canine aristocracy; for, even if their noses and style of hunting be good, they are invariably much affected by cold and wet weather, and can seldom undergo the fatigue requisite for the moors.

The most necessary qualifications of a dog are travel, lastingness, and nose. The two first are easily ascertained; but the other may not be found out for some time. I have seen dogs shot over for a season without committing many mistakes, and on that account thought excellent by their masters: their steadiness, of course, has been shown, but they have given no proof of first-rate nose. Even a good judge may be unable to form an accurate estimate of a dog's olfactory powers until he has for several days hunted him against another of acknowledged superiority. The difference may then be shown, not by the former putting up game, but by the latter getting more points. Should there be no tip-top dog at hand to compete with, the only other criterion, though not at all an infallible one, is the manner of finding game. The sportsman must watch most narrowly the moment when the dog first winds: if he throws up his head, and moves boldly and confidently forward before settling on his point, it is a very good sign; if, on the contrary, he keeps *pottering* about, trying first one side, then another, with his nose sometimes close upon the ground, even though at last he comes to a handsome point, I should think it most probable that he is a badly-bred, inferior animal.

Of all dogs, the worst for the moors is what is called a near ranger. Such flinchers may do well enough in preserved partridge ground; but on the steep hillside it is quite sickening to see their everlasting canter, fifteen or twenty yards on each side. The dog-breaker may say that, although the dog ranges near, he is working as hard as his more high-mettled competitor. For my own part, I never saw one travel in that way that either worked so hard, kept it up so well, or *found half so much game* as a free-hunting dog.

Let your pointers be really good, and a couple will then be quite enough to hunt at a time; more only encumber. If well broke, they will not pass over the near game; and when birds are scattered (the only time when the near-ranging *potterers* are in their element), they will find them one by one, with equal certainty and greater despatch. Many gentlemen, however, take no trouble about procuring good dogs until just before the season begins, and consequently must put up with inferior ones, in which case they are forced to hunt three or four together, or they have little chance of finding much game. And a most vexatious thing it is, after all, to see these cross-bred, ill-broke curs, uniting their efforts to annoy; —one putting up birds, another finding none, while a third contents himself with admiring the feats of his companion! "What's Bob doing?" "Nothing." "What's Dan doing?" "Helping Bob!!" Aware of what he has to expect should he be unprovided, the knowing man of the moors has always as many *good* dogs as he can work himself, and never suffers them to be hunted or shot over by another.[1]

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[1] The only way to hunt two couples of dogs at the same time, without risk of slacking their mettle, or otherwise spoiling them, is for each couple to be com-

The purchaser, before taking the trouble to try a dog, should make sure that he has a hard, round foot, is well set upon his legs, symmetrically, though rather strongly built; but the great thing is the head. It ought to be broad between the ears, which should hang closely down; a fall-in below the eyes; the nose rather long, and not broad; nostrils very soft and damp. If these points are present, the dog will seldom have an inferior nose. The above remarks relate principally to pointers, as I greatly prefer them to setters; but if the sportsman has a scanty kennel, I should rather recommend the latter, as they are often capable of undergoing more fatigue, and not so apt to be foot-sore. For my own part, however, I find the pointer so much more docile and pleasant to shoot with, that I seldom use setters; concerning the choice of which, as there are so many varieties, totally differing in appearance from each other, it would be useless to lay down any rules.

Many gentlemen, when the shooting season begins, are shamefully taken in by dog-breakers and others. Few are aware how difficult it is to know a good dog before he is shot over. The breaker shows his kennel, puffing it off most unmercifully. The sportsman chooses one or two dogs that suit his fancy; they drop at the sound of the pistol, and perhaps get a point or two, when birds are so tame that no dog but a cur could possibly put them up. The bargain is struck, the dog paid for; but, when fairly tried, he shows his deficiency in finding game. I have seen the breaker look round with an air of the greatest triumph if a hare should start, and his dog not chase: this is what any man who understands the elements of breaking, by a little trouble, and by taking the dog into a preserve of hares, can soon effect.

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manded by a separate keeper, and at a sufficient distance apart to prevent interference. The sportsman can thus move from one to the other, as they find game. I, however, always prefer hunting my own dogs, and never suffer them to be spoken to by any one until I have fired, when I trust to my man to enforce the "down charge" *without noise.*

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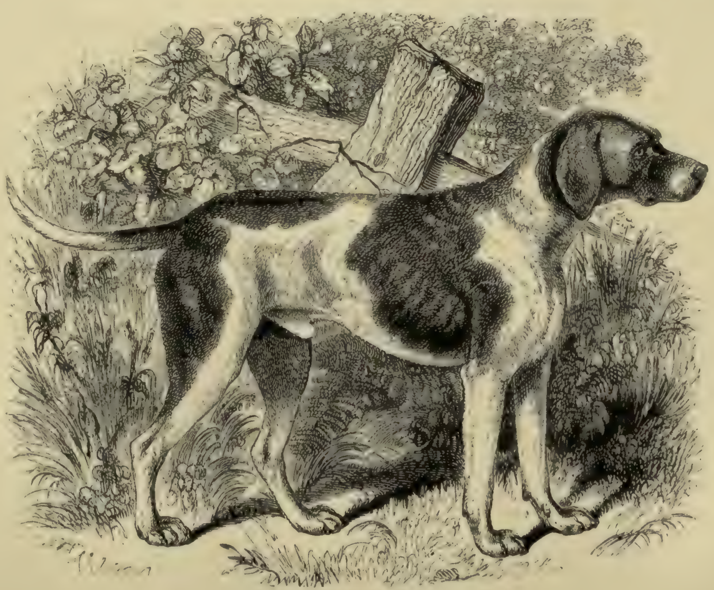

Pointer.

This, as may be seen, is a very old dog.

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Other obvious defects, such as not quartering the ground, hunting down wind, not obeying the call or signal, the veriest novice in field-sports will immediately detect. It is not, however, with faults so apparent that dogs for sale are generally to be charged. They are, for the most part, drubbed into such show subjection, that the tyro fancies them perfect, and only finds out their bad breeding and nose after a week's shooting.[1] To assist the judgment of the uninitiated, I have given accurate likenesses of the two best pointers I ever had. I know some faults might be found in them, but they have all the main requisites.

If your dogs are well bred, the great secret of making them first-rate on the moor is, never to pass over a fault, never to chastise with great severity nor in a passion, and to kill plenty of game over them. There are two faults, however, to which dogs, otherwise valuable, are sometimes addicted these give the sportsman great annoyance, but may often be more easily corrected than he is aware. One is the inveterate habit, contracted through bad breaking, of running in when the bird drops. This trick is acquired from the breaker's carelessness in not *always* making the dog fall down when birds rise—a rule which should never be neglected, on any pretence. *The steadiness of a dog, whether old or young, depends entirely upon its being rigidly observed.* After the fault of running in is once learned, the quickest remedy is the trash-cord and spiked collar; but many gentlemen buy dogs before shooting over them, and commence their day's sport without these appendages. They are thus obliged either to couple up the dog, or run the risk of having any birds that remain after the pack has risen, driven up, and those that have fallen mangled by him. I have seen dogs most unmercifully flogged, and yet bolt with the same eagerness every shot. It was easy to see the reason: the dog was followed by the keeper, endeavouring to make him "down"; there was thus a race between them which should reach the fallen bird.

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[1] Dogs of this kind remind me of an anecdote I remember to have heard from a brother sportsman, but for the truth of which I cannot vouch. Walking out with a highly-broke pointer, he suddenly missed him, when he presently espied him soberly and submissively following the heels of an old guinea-fowl, whose reiterated cry of "Come back! Come back!" he had thought it his duty to obey!!

The plan to adopt with a dog of this description is, when the grouse drops and the dog darts forward, never to stir—coolly allow him to tear away at the game until you have loaded; by which time he will most probably have become ashamed of himself. You will now walk up most deliberately, and, without noticing the bird, take the dog by the ear, and pull him back to where you fired, all the time giving several hearty shakes, and calling "down." When you get to the spot where you shot from, take out your whip, and between the stripes call "down" in a loud voice; continue this at intervals for some time, and, even when you have finished your discipline, don't allow the dog to rise for ten minutes at least; then, after speaking a few words expressive of caution, take him slowly up to the bird and lift it before his nose. If this plan is rigidly followed for several points, I never saw the dog that would continue to run in at the shot.

The other defect is chiefly applicable to young dogs: it is when they trust to their more experienced comrade to find the game, and keep continually on the outlook expecting him to do so. Nothing can be done for this but to pay the greatest attention to their point; selecting it in preference to that of the other dog, and always firing, however small the chance of hitting the bird. Also change the dogs they hunt with as often as possible. Young dogs, with this treatment, will very soon acquire confidence, and never keep staring at their companion, unless he is settling upon a point.

When the sportsman rears his own puppies, he should be most particular, not only about the acknowledged excellence of the sire and dam, but also that their breeding is unexceptionable and *well known*—especially that there is no cross of the rough, *however remote,* when breeding pointers, and no smooth blood when setters are the object. It sometimes happens that a dog, though not well bred, may turn out excellent; but the progeny of such dog or bitch hardly ever do so. This double caution is therefore most necessary, as otherwise much time and trouble might be spent upon a dog that never would be worth it, from a mistaken idea that, as his parents were so good, he must *in the end* turn out well too.

To cross pointers and fox-hounds, or setters and spaniels, for the sake of improving the noses of the former, or the travel of the latter, seldom answers. The one qualification *may* be gained, but the dog generally loses in every other.

In choosing young puppies, it is no bad plan (as the free-tempered and high-couraged generally turn out the best) to whistle out the litter, then strike your hands smartly together above their heads: the timid will at once shrink back. Give the preference to those who show least alarm. A timid sulky dog often grows worse as years increase; but a bold free one improves.

Except in driving game with beaters, there can be neither comfort nor pleasure in any kind of shooting without efficient and thoroughly-trained dogs. Immense prices are therefore freely given for a pup, or even a cross, from any distinguished kennel. Probably a man would be supplied with a really valuable article by applying to any of the celebrated canine dealers; but there are numbers of young and promising gun sportsmen who are eager for the aid of good dogs without paying a "perfect ransom" for them, and to such I may be allowed to write a few words on the subject.

I do not wish to be *dog*matical in the matter, although to the sticklers for high-caste dogs I must appear *dog-democratic* in recalling old Hawker's advice—viz., "to procure a pup of the best dog and bitch in your own neighbourhood," and the progeny will probably turn out as well as those of more famed ancestry. Of course (as the colonel says) the parents must be so far apart as to prevent any chance of affinity, otherwise the produce may be soft and worthless. I have known a splendidly-bred bulldog in appearance, at bottom turn out an arrant coward from this cause.

After half a century's experience of dogs and shooting (for I began to handle a gun when a schoolboy), I can assure the tyro that the best pointer I ever had was bred from a sire and dam unknown to any but local fame. I have seen in my day many excellent dogs of high pedigree, but never one which appeared to me his equal. The finest setter I ever possessed was bought for £12 from an obscure kennel.

By far the most perfect retriever, both for land and water, I ever knew, was also my own, and was the progeny of a water-spaniel and a large wiry terrier bitch. The son was so like his mother that farm-labourers often remarked when passing, "That's a strong terrie." Yet this dog, for acute sense of scent, sagacity, docility, pluck, and perseverance, as well as attachment to his master, was unrivalled. Amongst the numbers of bred retrievers which have belonged to me at different times, the only one that came near him was a large rough mongrel, whose sire I bought (without trial), as having the reputation of being a first-rate worker. His only points, however, were a good nose, and the will (perhaps too much) to use it energetically. His son can best be described by negatives; he was *not* a Newfoundland, he was *not* a water-dog, he was *not* a rough sheep-collie, but seemed to be a hotch-potch of all three kinds. The dam was a proved and excellent retriever, and her son was her fac-simile in appearance and disposition: at deer or roe he could not be excelled.

As springing dogs have now superseded setters or pointers in many of the great game counties of the south, I may mention that the best springer I ever used was a cross between a poodle and a cocker. I paid 5s. for the little creature when a puppy; and after a few years' practice she became so knowing that, besides avoiding raising game out of shot if my attention was otherwise occupied, she always gave a stifled bark to fix it before going in on her quarry. She was otherwise mute, and knew as well as her master that if a bird was sprung unawares to the shooter, he was taken at a disadvantage.

Many young dogs, having every natural good quality ready to be perfected, are ruined by the carelessness or indolence of the breaker in allowing too wide a range when the dog is inclined to take it. A free, active young dog needs especial watchfulness; for, if he is not judiciously curbed *at the very first*, his ranging soon increases to rambling, and when this (in my opinion) worst of habits becomes inveterate, the dog will only hunt his own ground in his own way. When, as constantly happens with a rambling dog (especially on the moors), he gets a point out of sight, and his master is unable to discover his position, he either springs his game or quits it—thus teaching himself to be either a creeper or a blinker.

I have no doubt any dog may be cured of rambling at first by a good-tempered, painstaking breaker; but I never knew one, after he had thoroughly learnt the bad lesson, which would not resort to his old tricks whenever his master's notice was relaxed for a moment. Even should the shooter be always watchful, the dog will not hunt with either spirit or success unless he is allowed his own will. I have tried the trash-cord, even heavily weighted, and every other means, on dogs spoilt in this particular by their breaker, but always without success. I was forced to destroy several for no other fault, and have such a dislike to a confirmed rambler, that of the two I would rather break a pup sluggish enough to need encouragement than one so keen as to require restraint. The former is sure to improve rapidly in travel and action as soon as game is killed over him, while the latter may become even more eager and forward from this very cause.

The spaniel race are not difficult to train if special attention is given *at the first* to keep them from hunting out of bounds. The whip and dog-call will soon force close-hunting into a habit, if the fault of wide-ranging is never overlooked through carelessness or indolence. After a dog learns the lesson that the prey is to fall to his master's gun, and not to be pounced on by himself, unless he is very stupid and worthless, he will be as anxious as the sportsman to gain fair shots, and retrieve the fallen game, whatever may be the nature of the ground.

I knew three Scotch terriers as good at this work as spaniels. They never sprang game out of shot, had excellent noses, and such soft mouths that they always brought what was wounded alive to their master—who held terriers in higher estimation than other covert dogs. There is no doubt, however, that their nature is to hunt wider and slower, to be more eager after footed game, and not to search every tuft and bush with the energy and perseverance of cockers or spaniels.

It is a good rule to avoid hunting pointers or setters along with small dogs, as they tempt the latter to extend their range. I have also found that large retrievers, though thoroughly trained not to "break shot," are more likely to make pointers or setters unruly at grouse or partridge than those of smaller size, as they are so much more observable in their efforts to find the dead or wounded.

Some sportsmen may say that they never allow their retriever to try for fallen game until their setters or pointers have failed to secure it. It appears to me that such usage might go far to discourage and slacken the mettle of any valuable retriever.

During the long course of my shooting experience, only two retrievers have belonged to me which I considered A1. A few words about their tempers and dispositions may be useful to those looking out for such valuable aids to the gun. The first and most perfect of these two dogs was sulky and unsociable. He would acknowledge no master but me, refusing to obey any one else, but all the energy of his rugged nature was used in my behalf with an unwearied devotion which no exactions could tire. As a shrewd gamekeeper observed, he was indeed "a faithfu', faithfu' beast!"

His rough surly face comes before me now, looking up beseechingly for orders when wild-fowl were on the shore, and ready to fulfil them to his last breath. On more than one occasion, after a tremendous swim for crippled ducks, he fell down on reaching land with his prey in his mouth, which only death would have forced him to part with to any one but his master.

Twice I was obliged to pay a surgeon's bill, besides compensation, for his savage attacks on beggars, and no collie dared face him within reach of our home. Yet this dog on the hearth-rug, amongst my little children, was as gentle as a lamb, allowing them to pinch his ears and tread on his toes without even indulging in a stifled growl. His disposition was the more remarkable when contrasted with a small cocker, which, though a great coward to grown-up people, resented any such liberties from children by a ready snap. The retriever was always considered the best guard possible for the little band; while the cocker, instead of defending them from enemies, might very likely have bitten them himself on slight provocation.

My other retriever was very different from his predecessor, both in temper and appearance. He was not unlike a St John's Newfoundland dog, though cast in a coarser mould and with a rougher coat. His nature was kindly, yet he was capable of great resolution in his sporting work. Although inferior to the other as a water-dog, and not his equal on land at smaller game, for deer and roe he was unrivalled. With the most perfect promptness he obeyed every order, but had no reflection to anticipate his master's instructions like his smaller competitor. Indeed I never met with a dog possessed of this quality in such perfection as old Gruff. The cause might be that the good-natured amiable dog studied to please *many* masters, while he who was of a morose disposition concentrated all his powers to find out the wishes of *one*.

The sire of the large retriever I bought for a good price, as he had the reputation of being a perfect dog. He had, however, been spoilt in breaking, was too rash and hasty, though he had a keen nose and good will to use it. His mother belonged to one of my relations. She was a most valuable retriever, and her son inherited all her good qualities, with others in addition.

Few lovers of shooting have been more careful than I to secure good heather and stubble dogs; but though sparing neither trouble nor money in their behalf, only three have belonged to me which I have considered first-rate, since I was able to handle a gun with effect. During all those years, dozens of excellent pointers and setters have been mine, but some drawback always kept them from attaining the highest rank in the dog line.

Two of my famous trio were pointers, and the other a black-and-tan setter. The former were chosen and reared from the litter; while the setter, as I have already mentioned, was bought when two years old for £12.

Although steady to point, back, and drop to shot the first season, none of them showed their rare excellence till the third, continuing to improve afterwards for some years. The two pointers cost me more care and watchfulness than the setter, which had the finest and freest temper, combined with the greatest docility, of any dog ever hunted under my eye. The pointers, however, after the fourth year, when thoroughly "made," were rather superior to the setter. One of them lived till his twelfth year, and, strange though it may seem, ranged and found game more successfully than ever on his last opening day of the moors! I will venture to affirm that few sportsmen in the kingdom can say as much for so aged and hard-worked a dog.

A dog of the first class should be equally good at all game on hill or dale. His habit should be hunting for birds by wind, but when a hare or rabbit on its form comes in the way, his exquisitely keen nose should be able to perceive the scent at once, and he should point them as steadily as birds. He will never poke his nose on the ground for fur, even if a bagful of footed game fall to his master's gun, and his own finding. Instead of his pace being either very fast or very slow, it will not change from a determined canter, which neither time nor hard labour can subdue. He will instantly see and obey the slightest signal of hand or voice, and when hunting with a comrade, he will not feel jealousy. If single-handed he will be ready to do his own work, besides that of another. Lastly, his constitution must be perfect, his feet sound, and after the hardest day's work he ought to be able to eat his supper with eager appetite. Such a character is a truthful description of the three paragons to which I have referred.

My numerous valuable second-class dogs would by many have been placed in the first rank. Not a few failed from temper. Some were excellent on heather, but never showed the same zest for turnip, potato, or stubble fields. Others, though capital for lowland work, were apt to slacken their mettle on the hills; and steady as they were at grouse, never showed the same aptitude for finding them as for scenting pheasants or partridges.

Many good sportsmen, I know, object to hunt Highland and Lowland game with the same dogs, and in most instances it may be best to keep to this plan. Indeed my own experience seems to confirm it, when owning, after so many years, that only three dogs equally good at *all kinds of game* have fallen to my lot, and that many a valuable dog may not reach the first rank by deteriorating when his ground and game are changed.

For instance, a grouse dog taken to ground where rabbits are plentiful, after a few are rolled over to his point, may begin to track fur by lowering his crest and getting careless of winged game. In another case, if transported to soft ground amongst snipe, his ardour will be cooled on account of the many points gained with little trouble.

Such temptations made no impression on my three favourites, which could be hunted anywhere and on all game, without the least fear of detracting from their high qualities.

"Few dogs, but good," has always been my motto on the subject, and none of inferior grade have ever cumbered my kennel, so the celebrated five described in this paper have a right to be called "second to none." To rank with them will be a rare attainment for any of my future ranging dogs or retrievers.

It may save a young sportsman both trouble and temper to be assured on long experience that those gun-shy dogs which crouch to heel in terror at the report, may, with a little care and kindness, be soon cured; while those which bolt home, or, what is nearly as bad, skulk round hillocks or behind knolls, are simply incurable, and may be destroyed at once.

INSTINCT OF DOGS.

It is often amusing to hear those who know little about the subject describing the "almost reason" of the St Bernard's dog, and not unfrequently of the Scotch collie.

It appears to me that the instinct of these animals is more prominently forced upon people's notice, and that they do not take the trouble to watch and discover it in the other species. Sagacity is more equally distributed among the different varieties of the dog than such casual observers are aware of; but it, of course, takes different directions, according to the temper, habits, and treatment of the animal. It would be a waste of time so far to control the keen tempers of sporting-dogs (by which I mean setters and pointers) as to make them perform the duties of a well-broke phlegmatic retriever. The instinctive power may therefore appear greater in one than the other; but from the quiet easy temper of the retriever, it is much less difficult to develop and make use of his instinct in that particular way: while the setter and pointer, owing to their more active life and hunting propensities, may often pass unnoticed, even by their masters, though every time they are in the field displaying as much tact as the most cautious retriever. Their sagacity is never thought of; and the only praise they get is, that they are "excellent dogs," which means, *that they find plenty of game.*

There is another reason why sporting-dogs appear more deficient in sense than some others, and that is, their mode of life. Confined always in the kennel, unless when seeking game, all their powers are employed to this end. There are, however, abundant proofs that, when made companions, and suffered to occupy a place upon the hearth-rug, they are capable of the same attachment, and would equal in sagacity the much-lauded dogs of St Bernard.[1] Indeed, the usual mode of imprisoning sporting-dogs is so great a disadvantage, that I have seen some, with excellent noses and every requisite for the moors, grow sulky, and refuse to hunt with their usual freeness, unless left in a great measure to themselves. This, I know, arose partly from a want of proper management, and from not keeping the medium between encouraging kindness and merited correction; for too much lenity is nearly as injurious to a dog as over-severity: sulkiness will often be the effect in the one case, shyness in the other. Still, if the dog were allowed to be the companion of his master, he would acquire both sense and tact in half the time, and would not give half the trouble either by shyness or sulkiness; whereas it will generally be found that a kennel-dog is long past his best before he excels in that sagacity on the moor which so greatly assists him in finding game. Even the veriest village cur, when kindly treated and permitted to bask at the "ingle-nook," will learn all sorts of tricks, many of them requiring as much *reflection* as the most intricate duties of the shepherd's dog. I had a little cocker, reared in a cottage, that of its own accord, when only seven months old, brought in the post-bag, thrown down by the mail in passing. The person who looked after the post having been detained for a short time, was astonished to see the bag safely deposited in the house; and, upon watching next day, saw the little creature marching along with its load. It had seen the bag carried in once or twice, and immediately learned to do so.

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[1] May we not be allowed to suppose the dog in Helvellyn, whose attachment to its dead master was thought a fit subject for their muse by two great poets of the day, was of the sporting kind?—at all events it was not "*of mountain-breed*" *!!*

I do not mean to deny that some varieties of the dog may excel others in sagacity; but this will be found in most cases to arise from other circumstances than the *natural gift*—and that dogs, whose avocations require a phlegmatic quiet temper, have certainly the advantage over others, though the instinctive powers of both, in the first instance, may have been equal. A terrier, for example, may be, and has been, taught to herd sheep, and if kept to this employment, would appear more sensible; but his snappish disposition, though an advantage in his own more congenial occupations, renders him unlikely to excel in those of the collie. The latter, again, is admirably adapted for his own work: his thick rough coat protects him from the severity of the weather, to which he is constantly exposed, and his less ardent temper prompts him to look for guidance from his master in all his movements. Both sheep-dogs and terriers may be taught to point, but they are always deficient in *hunt*, and their olfactory powers are never so acute as in those dogs which nature seems to have formed for the purpose. We thus see that dogs are trained to different employments, for many qualifications apart from their instinctive powers, though these may be materially increased or retarded by the nature of their occupations.

The Newfoundland and water dog are generally reckoned paragons of sagacity; but has their treatment nothing to do with this? From their earliest days taught to fetch and carry, and never leaving their master's side, they learn to understand his least signal, and, from constant practice, sometimes even anticipate his will. This is also precisely the case with the collie: made, as soon as it is able, to follow the shepherd to the hill, and from everyday habit always on the alert to please him, it daily acquires greater dexterity both in comprehending and obeying, till at last it can perform feats that perfectly astonish those who have not seen the gradual process. My retriever, before spoken of, gave many proofs of sagacity which excited the admiration of those who saw them; and yet I did not consider him at all more knowing than the old pointer whose cut I have already given. A superficial observer would wonder at the comparison; but, independent of the tact and ingenuity displayed by the pointer in finding game, I feel convinced that if his educational advantages and temper had been the same as the retriever's, he would have equalled him *in his own beat.*[1]

To illustrate my meaning, I may mention a feat or two of each: Having wounded a rabbit on the moors when the pointer was behind a knoll, but fancying, from the agility with which it made its escape, that I had missed it altogether, I was surprised to see him shortly afterwards bring a rabbit and deliberately lay it down at my feet. It would have been nothing if the dog had been taught to fetch and carry; but on the contrary, he was, of course, broken to drop at the shot, and never to lay a tooth upon game. Had he seen me fire and had afterwards stumbled upon the rabbit, he would from his breaking have thought he had no business to touch it; but, not having seen the shot, he fancied he had a right to bring what he had himself found upon the moor. Any person who was no judge of dogs would have said, "Why, this is no more than what any retriever puppy would have done." It is not, however, the mere act alone, but the connecting circumstances, which often show the superior instinct of the canine species.

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[1] Both these invaluable dogs have been under the sod for some years. They died of pure old age and hard work. One day, shortly before the old pointer's last 12th of August, a knowing keeper remarked to my man, "Surely you don't mean to hunt *that* dog. Why, he is not fit to walk along the road, let alone travelling the moors." Never was man more "out." According to my custom, I threw off with old Cigar and his comrade at eight o'clock, and hunted them till two, when they were relieved by a fresh pair. I shot till nearly eight in the evening, and bagged thirty-five brace. Fully the half fell to the old dog's point, and I never saw him hunt or find better in his life. It was his twelfth 12th! He died the following spring, and was immortalised by a *dog*-gerel epitaph:—

"We climbed the rocky hills, and trod the heather,
And many a 12th of August have we seen together.
At length thy foot grew weary, age its only clog;
And here thou art at rest, my poor old dog!"

Poor Gruff died a couple of years after Cigar, but I have never been able to replace him by a worthy successor—at least, by one uniting all his excellences. A Tweed spaniel came the nearest to him in docility, but, like most of these silken gentry, he is shy of the water in cold weather. Gruff was as hardy in the winter-storm as a walrus. Many years after, I was so fortunate as to possess another retriever, nearly, but not *quite*, his equal. He also is described in this work.

The performances of the retriever are more showy, and the generality of observers would immediately on that account pronounce him the more sagacious dog. In taking a walk with him one winter, I met a friend who had dropped a whip: if this had happened to myself, there would have been no difficulty, as I had only to send the dog off upon my track; but, upon trial, he immediately ran back upon that of my friend, recovered the whip, and brought it to me. Another time, when he was following an open carriage, a shawl was dropped: no one perceived the loss until the dog was seen carrying it in his mouth behind. Not long after, a bouquet of flowers was missed: I immediately looked round for the retriever, and, to be sure, there he was with the bouquet most jauntily carried in his mouth. But perhaps the following instance may serve still better to show the influence of temper and education upon the instinct of dogs. Having taken sea-bathing quarters for my family, about forty miles from my residence in Perthshire, I walked thither over the hills, accompanied by my faithful retriever. When I returned for a week's shooting, I ordered old Gruff to remain behind. After waiting three days, and finding I did not come back as he expected, he started off one night about nine o'clock, made his way through the most intricate bypaths and short cuts of all descriptions, across a deep ferry, and arrived at home about five next morning, when he was discovered lying at the door.

There are many authenticated accounts of dogs making much more distant journeys than this; but the point to be noticed is, his remaining three days, though perfectly at large, and then taking his departure. A keen-tempered dog would have started the next day, at latest, or, by having his attention engrossed with other things, have remained quietly where he was. Even in the former case, he would not have gained half so much credit for sagacity, as every one must have perceived that the patient retriever waited to see whether or not his master would return. Few would give themselves the trouble to remark that his education and apathetic temper favoured him in this particular, and that equal instinct might have been shown in the more hasty resolves and quicker movements of another. It is thus that keen dogs always appear deficient in sense, because they are hurried away by their temper from one thing to another; and their feats are seldom such as to arrest the attention or excite the wonder of the general observer. The instances I have given are merely mentioned as explanatory of my theory—viz., that we are apt to overvalue one dog for sagacity, while we overlook its more unpretending neighbour, because, from shyness, surliness, eagerness of temper, or want of practice, all its powers of instinct and memory are employed in *a different and less obvious way;* for there is no doubt, if a dog is eager, shy, or sulky, it may have superior instinct, and yet *show less* than another of a more phlegmatic, sociable, or easy disposition. This accounts for the difficulty of procuring a good retriever from a cross between the water-dog and terrier, so valuable if the medium between them is preserved; because when the dog partakes too much of the nature of the terrier his quick temper unfits him for the purpose,[1]—and when too little, he is generally deficient in nose. A cross between the water-dog and any others of the sporting kind would be still less likely to suit; and the Newfoundland is too large, and of the wrong colour. Perhaps (the noses of collies and terriers being pretty much upon a par) a breed between a water-dog and a collie might answer well: there is only the objection, that the progeny might be too large and conspicuous.

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[1] A dog of a very cool temper will retrieve wild-fowl better in loch-shooting than another with quicker movements and perhaps a finer nose. Many of the cripples in this shooting take refuge in weeds and bushes, and the keen-tempered dog is apt to overrun them, thus losing time; whereas the other slowly tracks them one by one to their hiding-place. It must be recollected that I do not speak

With regard to the St Bernard dogs, what is it they do but what almost any dog of *equal strength* might be taught also? It is certainly a noble occupation, but far, I should think, from difficult, to teach a dog to run the track of a man upon the bare mountain, and either guide or carry the benumbed wretch home. The collies in the Highlands do the same when sheep are in jeopardy, and know their own flocks from any others. They will also climb hills and work by the slightest signal from their masters at the foot.[1] All this may appear very wonderful to any one unacquainted with the nature of dogs; and still more so when he sees the very collie which had excited his admiration completely outdone in some *more domestic* feats of usefulness by a wretched turnspit.

If, therefore, my hypothesis be correct,—that there is not so much *real* difference in the instinct of dogs, but that the degree of sagacity they will exert for our benefit or amusement depends in a great measure upon their tempers and disposition; and that the *treatment* they meet with has much to

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of coast and cover shooting, where more agility is required: on the coast, from the numbers to be secured after a heavy shot of the stanchion-gun; and in cover, that wounded hares and rabbits, winged pheasants, &c., may be more speedily retrieved. For my own part, I should prefer the slow dog even in cover; but few sportsmen like to wait.

[1] A shepherd of my late father, celebrated for having the best collies in the country, preferred those with quick tempers, *to save himself trouble.* This man used to stand at the door of his hut, sending his dogs to "clear the marches" at the tops of the highest hills. They worked by signal long after they could not hear his voice. For this distant work, a slow dog, though more easily broke at first, and steady as a rock afterwards, was often found too lazy. The shepherd has known one lie down to rest for an hour behind a rock, when he thought himself unobserved. He therefore reserved these cool geniuses for the near work, and sent the younger and more keen-tempered on the distant and toilsome duty.

do in forming these tempers and dispositions,—it follows that too great care cannot be taken to train them properly, and especially *never to correct in anger or caprice.*

The indispensable qualifications of a truly valuable retriever are, an exquisite nose, a very soft mouth, unflinching courage in water, perseverance on land, *never to lay down game, however heavy or far to carry,* and a mild tractable temper. A dog gifted with these requisites must be trained entirely by kindness. This rule should never be forgotten. Severity may sometimes be needed to restrain an impetuous, headstrong pointer or setter, but so much depends on a retriever's own will and willingness, that any dog requiring harsh breaking had better be at once dismissed.

Some time ago, a hasty gamekeeper near Edinburgh got a practical lesson from his dog, which he would remember better than the soundest scolding his master could have given. He dropped a partridge with his first barrel, wounding another, which fell out of bounds, with his second. The dog retrieved the first bird, but not having perceived that the other was hit too, only wagged his tail, with an expressive look at the dead partridge, when ordered to fetch its neighbour. The keeper, losing patience, gave him a flogging! For weeks, although most willing and efficient in collecting the dead or wounded for any one else, the sagacious creature obstinately refused to recover game killed by one who so rewarded his efforts. The keeper, fully aware of his mistake, tried his utmost by kindness to regain the dog's confidence.

Fast retrievers are great favourites with all bad shots, as they quickly run down footed game, if ever so slightly struck. Winged game, but especially wild-fowl, are far more satisfactorily retrieved by a slow dog.

To old Ross of Tongue belongs the originality of training a dog to course seals. This mongrel, with a dash of the greyhound, used to creep like a cat along the sandbanks of the Kyles of Tongue. Whenever he felt secure of overtaking his game before reaching the sea, he darted off at full speed, rarely miscalculating distance. If the seal was half grown, the dog was often unable to detain it; but a very young one seldom pulled him to the water, until the keeper came up and knocked it on the head. Ross told me he had run down three of these in one day.

SPORT IN BUTE.

A RATHER curious speculation has sometimes amused me. Had rare old Gilbert White been a sportsman instead of a naturalist only, and had he rented grouse-moors, should we have gained or lost most by this metamorphosis? No doubt 'Selborne,' the most charming and classic of sketches, might have been less perfectly filled up; but, on the other hand, if the keen and philosophic eye of this magic painter caught but a passing glimpse of what hundreds regard no more than the "idle wind," what curious theories might have been started, and in what beautiful language would they have been handed down!

Power of pitching his tent in the remote wilds, and of removing it as his fancy may prompt, is the great boon given to the sportsman-naturalist by the present universal system of leasing shooting-ground. A goodly number of our keenest and best sportsmen are naturalists also; and when to this accomplishment is added an enthusiastic love of scenery, their enjoyments are greatly enhanced. For the last forty-two years I have been one of these autumnal wanderers, and have rented shootings not only in the north, south, east, and west of Scotland, but also in the islands, thus having the opportunity of comparing different districts of the country, and of noting, by the effects of climate, &c., on its various fauna, the slight causes which often diverge into wide results.

One of my abodes, the romantic old Castle of Kames in Bute, supplied me with an interesting field of amusement and research in the study of that island, chiefly by noticing the absence of birds and creatures familiar enough in many of my other quarters, or the presence of some rarely met with in rougher districts, but tempted to a summer sojourn in this genial clime.

One of my previous shooting-quarters having been in Mull, a comparison of the two islands was a natural and interesting subject of thought; for although both were situated on the west coast, and flanked by mainland mountains which wooed the Atlantic mists, there was yet a very perceptible difference of climate, which the zoology of the islands quite bears out.

To begin with the lowest order of animal life, I was much surprised never to have encountered one adder in Bute during the whole period of my lease. In Mull these reptiles perfectly swarm; and during the dog-days I have counted half-a-dozen in the course of a single forenoon. They seem to thrive as well as multiply—many which I stumbled on along the shores of Loch Baa being of immense size. One of these monsters took possession of a dry drain flanked by a stone dyke close to Glenforsa House. It had been attacked several times, but always contrived to glide into the wall. If the day was warm and sunny, there was the adder on the bank; but it became so wary, after having been occasionally pelted with stones, that on hearing the lightest step it slipped out of sight like magic. I desired my people, by taking a circuit, not to disturb it for a few days, and on a sultry morning crouched noiselessly to the spot. The creature was coiled up asleep, but the moment I raised my stick it darted for the wall. I struck just as its head entered the hole, and stunned it. When carrying it home alive by the tail, it disgorged a full-grown field-mouse. On telling some neighbours what a capacious gorge this adder had, they capped him with another killed on the opposite coast of Morven the year before, of most prodigious length and girth, and in its belly was a full-grown rat! As I could not at first swallow the rat myself, I took the trouble to verify, as far as testimony could verify, the gluttonous feat of this python, and found that I had been correctly informed.

A still more incredible story of a Mull adder I give on my own authority. The reptile was basking close to a wall, when my son's tutor (now minister of Kirkliston) threw a large stone, and fairly halved it. The head and shoulders wriggled into the wall, and he brought the tail to me. Three days after, he found the head half at the same spot hale and hearty, and when attacked, it hissed and bit his stick fiercely. This adder was severed about the centre, head and tail ends being of about equal length. So prolific in adders was Mull, that we have found them in winter coiled up in a heather-bush, no doubt surprised and frozen to death by one of those pinching night-frosts which often succeed the sunny butterfly-days of early winter.

The only serpent reptile I have detected in Bute is the familiar slow-worm. It is by no means plentiful here, although in Mull it is equally numerous with the adders. The rough ground of North Bute being well adapted to furnish food and shelter for reptiles, and the climate to foster them, why there are no adders and few blind-worms I do not pretend to guess.

The stoat abounds in Bute quite as much as in Mull, but the common weasel I have never seen but once.[1] A party of us surrounded and killed the creature on a January day, where it had taken refuge under a bush. It proved to be a beautiful example of the "cane" or "mouse-killer," considered a distinct species by many English gamekeepers. My own impression used to be that these mouse-killers are only the young of the common weasel, but I am now inclined to accord them the third class of our native weasels. My tiny specimen is of course preserved as proof that there are at least *canes* in Bute! Never during the term of years I spent in Mull could I detect a single instance of the common weasel; and from inquiries I made in Skye, I am of opinion that they are extinct there also.

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[1] Since writing the above I have twice detected full-grown specimens of the common weasel in Bute.

The larger-footed vermin, such as foxes, wild cats, martens, and (I think) foumarts, have most likely never been introduced into this island, or, if any of them were formerly indigenous, they have been extirpated. Hedgehogs, however, are far from rare, and my watcher trapped a brace of them last spring at the same egg set for hoodie-crows. The first escaped, minus a foot, which the man assured me had been the property of a rat of such gigantic dimensions, that no cat in Bute would be foolhardy enough to face him in single combat. As if to solve the mystery, and put a damper on his wonder and curiosity, next night the other hedgehog was taken. These prickly swine do great damage to all ground nests of eggs within their sluggish beat.

None of the grander birds of prey breed in Bute. The sea-eagle sometimes rests for a day or two when wandering south, or returning to her mountains again from a winter migration. I have, however, never seen a single instance of the peregrine falcon, the hen-harrier,[1] the golden eagle, or the buzzard, all of which were far from uncommon in Mull. Until lately, ravens used annually to hatch on the precipices of North Bute; but for the last four years they have deserted their rocks. Still, on the evening of an autumn or winter shooting-day, I have been often warned by an iron croak from the clouds that the corbie was scenting the carrion, and, followed by her young ones, had swooped across the Kyles from the shaggy mountains of Cowal, to feast them in security on the island prey.

Of the *Accipitres*, the only species I have verified in Bute are the sparrow-hawk and kestrel. Once or twice I noticed in the distance what might have been a female merlin; but as there were no nests of that tiny falcon found on my heathery braes, the bird most likely was a male sparrow-hawk. Three of *their* nests were found by my watcher one spring, all fixed in stunted trees, the spontaneous growth of "dells without a name," in the midst of my best partridge breeding-ground. We trapped the old male and female of two of these nests, and actually caught the third pair; but the female escaped by accidentally dropping a thrush she was feeding the young with between the jaws of the trap, which prevented them from holding—while the trap that caught the male, unfortunately had a weak spring. After this warning, neither of course would return.

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[1] Last autumn I perceived a female hen-harrier or ringtail skirting the shore of the Kyles, but it soon flew across to Argyllshire.

It is well understood by preservers of game that one hoodie-crow, or even a magpie, will destroy more grouse in the egg than a dozen eagles will do when they are fully fledged. On Kames and North Bute there were certainly far fewer black, and especially grey crows, than are generally met with on the west coast islands. We only discovered four nests in the season of 1862, built as usual on the top boughs of tall trees, or on the stumps of bushes growing out of the face of a beetling cliff. We trapped or poisoned the old couples of all the nests but one, placed far down in an inaccessible precipice. Two of these pairs were royston and carrion crows breeding together. In both cases the females were black, and the males grey. They had built in fir and oak trees, but the two couple which had nestled in the cliffs overhanging the sea were all grey roystons.

The number of magpies was so prodigious in North Bute that I often wondered how any lowland winged game had been raised at all. With trap and poison we massacred eighteen couple of old birds, each pair having a nest full of eggs or young! Jesse, in his 'Gleanings,' mentions a knowing bird-dealer who affirmed that there were two species of magpie. The smaller kind, which he termed "the bush magpie," always built in bushes or hedgerows, while the larger ones chose the tops of high slender trees. By far the greater proportion of those destroyed by me that spring had their nests in low scrubby bushes among the thick cover of North Bute. The Kames magpies, however, all built on the tops of high larches or firs. There was no perceptible difference in size of the old birds of the two districts; and it appeared evident that the reason why those at Kames were so aspiring in the situation of their high-roofed nurseries, was the absence of cover to conceal them; and by far the greater proportion of these sly birds put more trust in their own well-known hiding powers among the thickets of North Bute, than in the pinnacle of the most tall and dizzy fortress that nature ever reared.

It is now upwards of forty years since the secret of trapping flying vermin, by removing their young from the nest and using them as decoys, was first found out by myself and my late father's gamekeeper. The day of our discovery rises clearly to my mind's eye from beyond the deepening mists of these long years; and somewhat gloomily too, for on that very day I was the means of expelling from the loch of my ancestors the most romantic and time-honoured dependant on its bounty.

I had arranged a vermin crusade with the keeper among the islands of Loch Lomond, and the ospreys, which had just repaired their yearly nest on the ivied castle of Galbraith, were unfortunately too tempting sport for a thoughtless youth and a destructive gamekeeper. My first exploit, after being concealed on the islet, was to shoot the female, while my ally, selecting the trustiest of his "stamps," fixed a sea-trout found in the eyrie on the plate, and set the trap. We then rowed to the adjacent twin islands, forming "the Straits" of Loch Lomond, where no less than four couple of vindictive carrion-crows had each a nest of "hopefuls," within a few days of beginning their apprenticeship to the nefarious trade of the family. It was of no use to watch four nests for the chance of shooting the old crows, but a smart thought struck us—Why should we not use the young as *bait* in the circle of twigs? Immediately the four nests were emptied into twig-circles at the foot of their respective trees, and the traps set.

On our return the same evening, the poor osprey widower was fast in his trap, and next morning the female "hoodie" of all four nests was in the same predicament. The traps were reset, and the "he-ones" of two of the nests taken; but the other pair of males had been so scared at the plight of their struggling mates, as to allow the young to perish rather than venture to feed them. To obviate this, I have lately adopted the plan of setting two circles of twigs, *out of sight of each other,* and putting half the young in one circle and half in the other. Should an old bird be trapped, I change the young to a fresh circle of boughs a little way off. The surviving old bird will readily come to the fresh-set circle, although nothing would induce it to risk itself where it saw its helpmate so mysteriously in grief.

The familiar kestrel is equally well distributed in Bute as on the mainland. Distinct in manners and habits from both the falcons and the hawks, this bird is no less perfectly endowed for the part assigned to it by Nature's law. Anchored in the air by that power of wing peculiar to this *day owl,* it plies the trade of mouse-hunting alike on the heathery hill or on the cultivated field. Mice being most rife in the dusk, the kestrel is the latest hunter of the hawks, and is of course gifted with a larger eye to collect the last rays of failing light. Although they have no objection to birds, *when they can catch them,* and prowl *all day* to provide for their nestlings, I consider kestrels less hurtful to game than the ivy-owl, which flies entirely *by night;* and my opinion is borne out by the feeding hoards of both when they have young. It is a fact that kestrels have far less difficulty in providing their nestlings with a constant supply of field-mice than the brown owl has; and this is accounted for by the kestrel's power of wing, which enables her to keep the air with the same ease as those buoyant owls which live exclusively on mice. The last summer I fished Loch Baa, a pair of these birds were rearing their young close to "the Salmon Point." Every time I fished the point, the hawks flew round screaming, while I assured my oarsman (a poacher from Salen) that they did no harm to game, and much good to the farmer. The man could scarcely conceal a sneer, until one afternoon the screamer dashed out of the wood, within a few yards of our heads, with a large field-mouse dangling in its claws. "I see'd its tail an' legs as plain as the boat," he repeated, again and again.

I knew of four kestrels' nests on my Bute shootings in 1861, most picturesquely placed on lonely points of rock, but did not permit any of them to be molested, with the exception of a young one, which my boys reared along with a sparrow-hawk of the same age. They never quarrelled, got into fine feather about the end of July, and seemed quite contented in their enormous cage. The kestrel once escaped, and flew about the old trees and tower in a restless unhappy manner, and seemed delighted when it found the way back to captivity —not unlike those inhabitants of the city suburb, who have learned to prefer their close den to the wildest freedom.

I am sorry to bring a charge of poaching against the respectable and industrious rook; but in dry seasons, when the parched ground refuses the usual supply of slugs and worms, these birds are very destructive among the eggs of the pheasant or partridge preserve. The charge of devouring young birds has never, as far as my research goes, been brought home to rooks, although members of the same order, but partners in a smaller firm, have been convicted of kidnapping and murdering pheasants a few days old. Two pairs of jackdaws, after a long drought, were shot in the act of picking up pheasants from the coops as soon as they were hatched, to satisfy the craving of their voracious nestlings. I am convinced, however, that these evil deeds are exceptional, and that almost any bird, as well as omnivorous crows, when deprived of its favourite food, can subsist and even thrive on what it likes far less, and would indeed otherwise reject.

An appropriate rookery surrounds Kames Castle, and to watch the order and discretion of the sable colony when superintending the education of their respective families was a favourite pastime of mine. From the time they emerge from the wicker nursery, and are promoted to the schoolroom as " branchers," the system of rook instruction begins. They are taught to use a convenient bough always above the nest, and the parents, in bringing food, approach the nest-tree where they can be first discerned from this look-out twig. At first, when fed, the perchers were apt to plump down into the nest; but soon becoming stronger, they hopped and fluttered from spray to spray, but always above the sheltering nest, and ready to drop into it at the warning caw of the old ones. The flapping wings and eager calls of the young often warned me that the parents were approaching long before I saw them myself; and I was often amazed at the *intuition* of the different young broods in detecting the approach of their own father or mother among the black multitude hovering and cawing in the air. The branchers were not encouraged to take an adventurous flight to the adjacent tree until quite strong and fully fledged; after this they soon learned to follow the flock to the adjoining feeding-grounds.

From their cheerful social habits inviting observation and study, rooks and the interior economy of their commonwealth have furnished matter for many curious tales. I give the following instance, which took place recently: There had been for years a rook's nest on a tree in the back-garden of a house in Moray Place, Edinburgh. During the winter of 1863 a large company of rooks pulled it quite down. The following spring a pair rebuilt the nest, laid eggs, and began to sit. An immense troop of their black kindred soon surrounded them, killed the male, who fell into the area, slew the female on her eggs, tore off one of her wings, and all the pirates disappeared as suddenly as they came, and never revisited the place—except, indeed, one solitary spy, which flew round and round the house the morning after the massacre, making a great noise. The butler picked up the slain rook and the female's wing, while the family watched with wonder the storming of the nest and the double murder.

A gentleman living in Newbattle Terrace, at the south side of Edinburgh, told me a curious rook anecdote. Being unwilling to allow a colony from a neighbouring rook settlement to take possession of the old trees around his house, he shot the female of the first couple that built a nest on them. The widower paired again directly, and brought the new mate to the same house, when she shared the fate of the first. The determined settler immediately took to himself a third partner, and installed her into the fatal lodging. After her death the rooks assembled in a body, and tore down the nest. My authority for these facts is unimpeachable, and at the service of any one who thinks it worth while to demand it.

It may be from their uniform black inviting attention, but no birds show the Albino stain more frequently than blackbirds or rooks. I have seen these opposite "extremes" of colour "meet" in the rook almost every season. I shot a young one in the rookery at Kames with a white bill, another with white nails to its toes; a third had white wings, the most common phase of this *lusus naturæ.* The contradiction of a whole nest of white blackbirds, and another of white rooks, in both cases the parents being black, was the most unaccountable freak that nature could possibly play.[1]

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[1] A notice of a white sparrow in the 'Scotsman' gave rise to this reply :—

"Kames Castle, *Oct.* 10, 1865.

"Sir,—The white sparrow of Leith Walk is not the *rara avis* the correspondents of the 'Scotsman' suppose.

"I have one in my collection at 1 Royal Terrace, shot by my son in the barrack square of Dundalk. In the same case is another with white wings, shot by myself at a farm-steading near Joppa. Another buff sparrow haunts the village of

When the month of December is mild, rooks build, thrushes sing, black-cocks croon, wood-pigeons coo, martin-swallows sometimes appear, and even butterflies have been known to show themselves. Editors of newspapers are often bored at Christmas with accounts of some one or other of these wonders, which so often occur every mild winter season.

Another intereresting section of the omnivora, the starlings, are very numerous in Bute. They come in clouds every evening to roost on the old beeches and elms, close to and even among the rooks. Hidling in their nesting habits, they cannot be watched so easily as rooks; but by the common mode of fixing boxes to the higher branches of a tall tree, we induced two pairs to adopt a ready-made home. I liked better, however, to see them choose their own site among the thick ivy of the garden wall, where several pairs hatched every year. Of course my boys tamed one, which proved the most pleasant and amusing of pets. It was early taught to quit its cage in the kitchen and devour the flies, which were so dexterously snapped up that one's eye often could not follow the capture. The windows were never shut when "the stare" was hunting, and it often flew round the lawn for half a day, but always came back to its cage before dusk. Our starling, however, was not sentimental, and if he had been, had no right to the plaintive plea, "I can't get out."

One feels a kind of reverence for those birds whose life is spent in the silence and solemnity of night; and the music in which they vent their contemplations, though always in the minor key, is listened to with more interest, and perhaps scarcely less pleasure, than that of sunshine and the day. The spectre-like ways and melancholy hootings of these night-lovers please well the fancy; while the oft-repeated plaint of the wood-owl, from ivied tree or mouldering tower,

Port Bannatyne, close to this place. Another white-winged sparrow I see almost every day when going to shoot in the north end of the island. The Port Bannatyne bird I saw all last season as well as this.—I am, &c.

"John Colquhoun."

is answered, perhaps, by some inner second of our own. Even the wild screech of the white owl, as it flits stealthily and rapidly along, has a power over us peculiarly its own; and one is amazed that so true a poet as Cowper could class the call of these honoured sages as "even beneath the harsh tones of the jay, the pye, the daw." Surely he could never have listened to them under the canopy of heaven, but have only caught the sound from his own drawing-room, with all the curtains closed.

The country around this venerable castle seems especially adapted to rear both white and brown owls. A mixture of cultivated and waste land, interspersed with woody dells, old ruins, and hollow trees, ought to have attracted them from the mainland coast opposite, where they always breed; yet, though constantly watching, I have never seen or heard either of the more common species,[1] while the rarest (the short-eared owl) twice unexpectedly presented herself on Kames Hill when I was ranging for grouse.

About the beginning of August 1864, I was examining the ground with a view to the 12th, and my dogs "poked up" this owl, when she flew a little distance and perched on the top of a bing of stones capping a heathery mound. My youngest son, a schoolboy, was my only companion, and of course wished me to go home for a gun while he watched the owl. Not having a specimen in my collection, I was much tempted, but finally decided that, as the bird would most likely haunt the place, we would always give the owl's cairn a trial when grouse-shooting near it. All the early part of last season I never passed the mound without a close look-out; but the searches became more careless each succeeding time, and at last were omitted altogether. On the morning of the 4th of September of the following year, thirteen months after we first saw this rare bird, I was after grouse with *the same companion,* close to "the hoolet's cairn," as he called it, when of her own accord she rose at some distance from us, and I shot her. It was but seldom that my youngest boy was with me on my shooting excursions; and, considering my many trials for *the* owl with one or other of his brothers, that he should have been the only one out the day she fell, might have furnished good material for a superstitious Highland legend.

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[1] Some time after the above was penned, a white or barn owl took possession of the garden-wall ivy—the only one I have seen in Bute.

The far more common long-eared owl I have never seen when hunting there, but once or twice I distinctly heard its scream close to the castle windows, and once my gillie lad brought me a half-grown one, found in a dying state on the lawn. It seemed starved to death, being a perfect skeleton.

I have frequently listened for the drowsy "chur" of another favourite bird of the dusk, the fearless night-jar. That this migrant should prefer Mull to Bute, where night-moths are so plentiful, seems to me unreasonable. Not one fern owl have I seen or heard on the northern district of Bute, while in Mull the monotonous spinning-wheel note was raised each July evening close to both our shooting-quarters; and I have preserved the finest male specimen I ever saw, which I shot one 12th of August, raised from the heather by my dogs.

The more obtrusive and noticeable day migrants, such as the cuckoo, the landrail, and the swallow tribe, seem to revel in our neighbourhood; while fly-catchers and white-throats delight the eye with their graceful movements among the laurel bushes. From entries in my journal, I find that, on the 5th of May, when we returned to our island home, "Cuckoos and landrails are in full cry, and chimney swallows are flying in considerable numbers. Neither the window martin nor swift has yet appeared. The gardener told me that he first saw a swallow and heard the cuckoo on the same day, the 30th of April." "Monday, 22d May.[1]—Window martins began to build in the eaves of the old tower. Saw, on the 18th, the first and only pair of swifts I have noticed here this season. Heard yesterday morning, at twenty-five minutes past three, two cuckoos, two landrails, a thrush, a sedge-warbler, and other birds, all singing and calling at the same moment. The landrail in the clover field, and the sedge-warbler among the laurels, never cease their love-call during the darkest night." "Friday, June 9th.—The pair of swifts attempting to take possession of the same martin's nest they stormed last year."

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[1] A daughter of the late Lord President Hope gave me the following curious and interesting particulars of a swallow's nest which she had often heard told by

That season the bold attack of the swifts was finally repulsed by the determined resistance of the martins. From coming early the previous year, the black pirates had little difficulty in seizing the newly-made home of the industrious builders; but this time the martins fought with desperation in defence of their young as well as home, so the pair of swifts, after their defeat, took easy possession of an empty martin's nest at Kames Villa, where my neighbour told me they brought up a thriving family. I marked the incubation and daily feeding of the young swifts last year until they took wing: I then carefully watched them each day till they left us for the arid plains of Africa. My last entries were Monday the 1st of August, Tuesday the 2d, and Wednesday the 3d, after which date I saw none in Bute till my note of them next May.

All birds feeding in the air live on winged insects, and all feeders on winged insects must be migrants. No better type of both visits this country than the bird last mentioned. It is the fleetest and strongest-winged of all British birds. For ten long hours of a July day, without resting, will this indefatigable creature dart through the air at an immense height, collecting the higher-flying insects with its flat-shaped beak, the gape of which, as in all the swallows, is admirably adapted for

her eminent father: A pair had built their nest in a corner of the Lord President's window. The fabric, however, always fell, until two older swallows *built it for them,* and then left them in possession.

hoarding the treasure. I once counted about a dozen black flies in the gape of some newly-shot swifts. So exclusively is this large swallow a bird of the air, that it never alights except when scrambling into its nest, and if placed on flat ground, from the weakness of its feet and length of its wings, would be unable to rise. The feet, exactly like a small hand, are totally unfitted for walking, and only serve the purpose of clutching the eaves of a house when seeking the nesting-place. Feeding higher in the air than the other swallows, their insect-food fails soonest, so they come later and leave earlier than any of the other swallows. Three months is their usual time with us; while the other three species of swallow—viz., the chimney one and the window and bank martins—not only come earlier, but stay two months later. I saw a bank martin in the south of England on the 25th of November 1864; and on the 5th of December following, another pair hawking for insects among the house-tops of Henley-on-Thames. I never before remember seeing these birds so late in departure.

The range of the chimney swallow and the two martins comes much nearer the ground than that of the swift. They often alight, and, from the conformation of their feet and shorter wings, can easily rise again. The weaker wing is made up for by the stronger foot, which gives these swallows the power of resting on house-tops, rails, or even on the ground itself.

Full before my window a pair of fly-catchers used to keep continually darting from the rails of a wooden bridge after insects on the wing. These birds may be called the next in succession to swallows, for although they live much on the ground, they find the chief of their food in the air. They arrive in Bute a little later than the swallows, and depart shortly before them.

On the broad planks of the bridge grey and yellow wagtails find a constant supply. These graceful creatures, although occasionally catching a fly in the air, keep almost constantly on the ground, where their active feet and legs enable them to chase their prey with great activity. Emphatically a ground bird, the wagtail is not confined to winged insects, but feeds much on worms and the eggs of land and water flies. This subsistence does not cease entirely in winter; hence it does not migrate, or only partially so, from colder to milder places in our own country.

The rich fields of Bute teem with skylarks. These general favourites feed in summer on the field insects and earthworms, in winter almost entirely on the seeds of annual weeds scattered over the corn stubbles. Totally independent of trees, they are the free songsters of the air, and from fields without a hedge, or upland slopes without a bush, trill forth their melody so charming to our ear, while the figure of the little siren, twittering in a flood of light, is wholly lost to our ken.

The larks introduce the buntings, the first of the hard-billed birds. Some of them approach the larks in their habits, by living much in cultivated fields, and refusing to perch on trees. They all have bills formed for breaking the rinds of seeds. They also eat insects moderately. I have never seen the common bunting in Bute, nor the snow species in winter. I have an Albino of the former in my collection, shot by my son at Fort-George.

Immense flocks of finches congregate in Bute all winter, and are most useful to the farmer, consuming the seeds of troublesome weeds which otherwise would overrun the country. Where the land is poorer, the finches migrate southward in winter, returning again to the north, when they separate to breed.

Greenfinches, and, of course, chaffinches, build near the old Castle of Kames—the goldfinch and greyfinch among the whins of the neighbouring brakes. Although so hard-billed, all these finches eat caterpillars and other insects moderately. The truest seed-eater of the race is the goldfinch, its favourite food being thistle, chickweed, and dandelion seeds. The green and grey finches are very partial to flax and lint seeds; hence their name of green and grey "linties" or linnets.

In describing the birds around this ivied tower of Bute, any one with a turn for natural history will at once perceive that I have, link by link, connected the most perfect of the soft-billed migrants of the air (the swift) with the hardest-billed resident (the goldfinch) which collects food on the ground. Like all God's works, there are no gaps in ornithology—one species glides into another until they are dovetailed into one harmonious whole.

In crossing the Minch some years ago, a little dark bird was constantly flitting past our cutter with all the characteristics of a swallow—powerful wings, long tail, body thrown well forward, and tapering like a canoe. Seamen have a superstitious dread that this sea-swallow brings storms, and delights in them. But the truth is, that "stormy petrels" dislike the tempest as much as their neighbours, as it is only when the sea is tolerably quiet that they can collect the chief part of their food, which consists of the oily substance on the top of the waters. When the waves rise, of course the surface of the sea is much increased, which disperses the oil, and gives far more trouble in collecting it; add to which, the birds are so light and buoyant, partly from their greasy food, that, like the thistle-down, they appear the sport of the hurricane. When feeding they use both wings and feet, and while the former are expanded the latter tip the water, so the little bird appears both flying and walking. It is on account of this kind of "walking on the water" they derive their name of Petrels or Little Peters.

It was a lovely June night when I crossed the Minch, and many a sea-swallow was skimming in two senses ocean's calm bosom. When they were preening off the collected oil, its effect made the bird so light that, like a gossamer, it seemed to touch the sea but not to press it.

In size, shape, rapidity of flight, as well as endurance on wing, sweeping even over the broad Atlantic, petrels bear a close resemblance to the common chimney-swallow. But if the joyous sunny swallow, always associated with verdure and beauty, has this ocean delegate equally suggestive of clouds and tempest, it has also a representative among the sombre birds of night. The night-jar, familiarly known as the "night-hawk," not only connects the owls with insect-feeders, but also forms the link between swallows and owls. Like the swallow tribe, it is a migrant and insect-feeder, preying on the night-moths, beetles, and cockchafers, by following and capturing them in the air as swallows seize day insects. Indeed, the capricious evolutions of this twilight spectre bear close resemblance to the sportive wheels of the birds of summer sunshine. It has been called "the night-swallow," just as stormy petrels are commonly known to sailors as swallows of the ocean.

From hiding in the daytime in brakes of fern, the night-jar is also appropriately styled "the fern owl"; and indeed the silky feathers, noiseless flight, large eye, dusky colour, and nocturnal life of this bird, quite entitle it to a low niche among the owls; while the insect food, migratory habits, large gape, soft beak, and weak feet, prove it equally akin to the swallow family, which right I have just claimed for it. The night-swallow has the advantage over the day one in a hair-netting on each side of the bill—a very great assistance in night-hunting, but not needed and therefore not given to the bird of the sunlight.

To a heedless listener, the song or call of each individual of any particular species of bird may appear exactly alike, but there is often considerable variety. Song-bird fanciers know this well; but in their case it may be urged that domestication and care have altered and drawn out the voices of their favourites, just as judicious farmers improve their stock. But I take as illustrations the most obtrusive and monotonous of our day and night birds, and to a fine ear scarcely any two of them will be found in the same key. There are also prominent and exceptional points of difference in the call of a particular cuckoo, as well as in the hoot of an eccentric ivy owl.

A cuckoo that haunted our garden all one spring and summer, and was most useful in grubbing up the cabbage and gooseberry caterpillars, put an additional note into its pipe. When a neighbour cuckoo from the near hill, and another from the beeches on the lawn, struck up the rubrical coo-coo, they were always replied to by the innovator's coo-coo-coo. We made him a D.D., and the "Dr" had perhaps as much reason for the change in his ritual as if his degree had come from the Senatus of Edinburgh University itself. When fishing St Mary's Loch with a friend, the cracked voice of one cuckoo contrasted oddly with half-a-dozen others scattered through the neighbouring woods. We were lashing opposite sides of the loch, and the first question asked on meeting was —"Did you hear the cracked cuckoo?"

Although living close to the old trees where the brown owls hoot every night, some people are so unobservant as never to have remarked that the "dismal bird" has two calls. The first is one prolonged note, followed a few seconds after by a juggling imitation. The owl then rests its voice a longer or shorter time according to its whim, without any approach to regularity in these intervals. But not to hear the second trembling hoot of a brown owl immediately following the first clear note, is rare indeed; and I have only remarked this in the case of one or two innovating owls among the many I have listened to under the spring or autumnal moonshine.

There are no rock-doves in Bute, but great numbers of ring-doves (the common wood-pigeon) fully supply their place. All spring the groves are soothed with the love-note of this ornamental bird; and when we were searching for vermin in May, the constant crash of the wood-dove from her wicker saucer of two eggs, gave token of flocks that would congregate in autumn and never separate until "the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."

When the fruits and berries of early harvest begin to ripen, numberless small companies of wood-pigeons shelter in the shaggy copses of the Kyles, which soon unite into large assemblies under the spreading branches of the old beech-trees, to regale on their delicious nuts. So long as there is abundance of this beech-mast food our lawn beeches attract their myriads, which vie with the rooks and starlings in giving cheerfulness and animation even among the sere and yellow leaves of the shortening day.

The fine shoals of white fish that used to haunt the bays of Bute, have of late years considerably deserted them. In winter, multitudes of "herring hakes" are captured with the net —many of large size. I have seen hampers full on Port Bannatyne quay all through January. They are good food when cut into steaks and fried. One day a boy brought me a basket of five very broad-shaped fish with red fins, like the bream or "braise" of Loch Lomond. They were more than a pound in weight, and he only asked a penny for each, and was quite pleased with sixpence for the lot. He called them "silver haddies," but I rather think "sea-perch" is the proper name. He caught them with a hand-line and a bit of herring for bait. During a whole season I fished Loch Long very successfully, both with herring and mussel bait, and with hand and long lines, but I never either caught or heard of this "silver haddie" in that branch sea-loch of the Firth of Clyde.

When we were driving along the Kyles for a day's partridge-shooting on one of the northern farms of Bute, a whale of about thirty feet long rose close to the shore. On overtaking the gillie, whom we had sent forward with the evening relay of dogs, he assured us with a face of awe that the whale had become dangerous in the night, and driven the fishermen ashore. Had it been one of the Arctic whales, not unfrequent in the

Sound of Mull, the angry freak of the leviathan would have been characteristic enough; but as the present monster of the deep was only a bottle-nose or "black-fish," it was evident that the boatmen had made the lad swallow a story "very like the fierce fish," whose startling *entrée* had whetted his appetite for the terrible.

On questioning the fishers next day, they laughed heartily, saying it was true that a black-fish had broken a net some miles below, and that the one we saw had begun to blow and lash the water with its tail, but these vagaries were only signs of anxiety lest its young one, which no doubt was near, might get among the boats and nets. In place of dreading these small whales, the fishers were always glad of their company, as harbingers of a successful night's fishing; and about the same time last year I watched an old female bottle-nose and two young ones gamboling among the fleet of "scows," while the crews looked kindly at them as the jackals of their trade.

Prodigious droves of porpoises also hang upon the herring-shoals. The smaller kind, called "pelluchs," often spring several yards out of the water, and come down with a thump that may be heard in calm weather more than a mile off, while the white foam caused by their fall in the sea can be distinguished at double that distance. Frequently, in my walks or shooting excursions along the shores of the island, I have seen more than a hundred of these creatures rolling, splashing, or springing clear of the sea like fresh-run salmon.

A solitary grey seal for some years frequented the rocks above Ettrick Bay. The old hermit showed himself when the bag-nets proclaimed the annual influx of salmon to the bay, and he cruised about the coast as long as the fish remained. One year "the grey sealch" was seldom out of the shallow water, and my watcher was always reminding me to bring my rifle-barrels — especially when the weather was warm and calm. Once, when shooting on Glenmore and Ettrick side, he would fain have changed my gun into a rifle, for the seal had been so bold that morning as to prevent his wife from filling her pitcher at the spring. "The beast," quoth she, pathetically, "pat up its awfu' coorse head close to me an' the bairns—I was feared it wad come ashore an' tak' ane o' them awa'."

On several occasions I walked down to the bay armed and ready, but the enemy was either invisible, or was plying his piratical vocation among the salmon far beyond reach of my bullets. During 1865 he did not put in an appearance at all; and a few years before he also absented himself for a whole salmon season, but returned on the following one at the usual time. The many years that the Ettrick seal summered in its bay gained for it some local notoriety; while its curious and methodical habits so far interested me as to stop all desire to put an end to its interesting career.

Not being an entomologist, my observation of the insects of Bute has been very circumscribed. I have seen none of the southern butterflies or moths which the mild climate of this island had led me to expect. Neither cockchafers nor stag-beetles enliven the twilight, and not one specimen of the larger sphinxes have we captured or even seen. Had there been any, no doubt some of these gorgeously-pencilled beauties would have found their way into our drawing-room, along with the sober-coloured small moths which beset our gas-lustres every warm, dark night, as both sides of our glass door into the garden were left open, when the gas was lit, and long after darkness set in.

In the summer of 1864, not only were wasps' nests more numerous than I ever saw them anywhere else, but their size was also enormous. There were at least a dozen close to the castle and garden. I have long had in my little museum what I considered as fine a specimen of the wasp's hive as it was possible to procure; but two of these from Bute (one built in a hedge adjoining the garden, the other fixed to a currant-bush in the very midst of the fruit) were nearly double the circumference of my preserved paragon. In 1865, although the fruit was fully as plentiful, and the season equally fine, there were scarcely any wasps' nests, and the few we discovered were wretched weedy productions, scarcely deserving the name.

As if in contrast to the wasps of 1865, the wild bees throve amazingly. My boys found no fewer than nine "binks" along the banks of the brooklet that feeds the duck-pond. These hives comprised the yellow "foggy" bee, the small and large humble-bee, and one hive of red-hipped bees. In the evening we often removed the thatching, and inspected the grubs and honeycomb of the foggy bees' hives. Some were much more cross and dangerous when disturbed than their neighbours; and it is a rule acted on by schoolboys, that when wild bees hive under ground, and they fail to reach them at the first digging, it is useless to attempt a second, for the swarm will remove or destroy the honey on the first alarm from the spade.

It is a curious fact that honey-bees don't like the flowers or heather of Tighnabruaich. They therefore fly across the Kyles to Bute, and gather honey there. In returning laden, however, they are unable to recross the sea, and multitudes are found drowned. There is no honey to be had in Tighnabruaich in consequence. They thrive well in Bute, for, one summer, my boys took a hive in the old tower of Kames Castle full of splendid honey.

Had more southern night-insects found their way to the genial climate of Bute, they might probably have been followed by the great bat—*Vespertilio altivolans* of naturalists. This night-flyer takes the same place among bats that swifts do among swallows. Like that of swifts, their flight is rapid and high, and the term of their appearance equally short. I have watched them from Henley Bridge coursing over the Thames among the other bats, which looked, in comparison, no bigger than butterflies. They shelter during the day in hollow trees, but never under the slates or leads of houses or out-buildings, the favourite refuge of the two other species of British bat. I have one of the Henley great bats stuffed, and, barring its colour (a rich chestnut), it is precisely like a giant of the smaller common kind.

The top of the old tower of Kames is a city of bats. On raising the lead sheeting about the beginning of summer, we discovered hundreds both of long-eared and little bats, each female having her piccaninny attached by its tiny claws to her breast. When hunting in the twilight, they carry their young one too; and the little creature is so deftly and firmly fastened as not in the least to incommode the parent, or hinder her success in moth-hunting. The mothers nurse their young ones in this way, which are the most horrid imps it is possible to fancy.

The grousing of this island would never suit many of the sportsmen-migrants who crowd our moors in August and September. The *battue* system from the south has been so successfully applied, even to Scotch moors, that in all our first-class ranges the difference between good and bad sportsmen or good and bad dogs is scarcely noticeable. If the man is a fair shot little else will be required of him; while his dogs, if superior ones, are wasted on such ground, and may even have their mettle slacked, their hunting powers weakened, and their instinct dwarfed, from finding multitudes of birds without working for them. To my mind, sixty or eighty brace killed on these swarming beats deserves to be placed in the same category as a pheasant-drive, or shooting rabbits in a teeming warren.

The moors which give most pleasure and satisfaction to a true and able sportsman are those which, with the aid of first-rate dogs, will afford a bag of from twenty to thirty-five brace. On such ground he can watch with delight the instinct which his high-couraged and keen-scented dogs throw into their work; his own knowledge of the sport and his walking powers will have full scope; and should his bag be up to the mark at the end of the day, he can feel satisfied that it was scientifically and pluckily filled.

In the above remarks I only allude to men who lay claim to be called the *élite* of the shooting world. A predecessor of mine, in a grouse tenancy, candidly told me that he gave up the moor, as he had to wander so long without a shot that he was likely to miss from nervousness. I also suspected that his kennel was none of the best, for during the term of his lease he never exceeded four brace of grouse in one day; while on the first 12th I shot over the hill, with first-rate dogs, my bag was nineteen brace, and from ten to fifteen during August and the first weeks of September. This gentleman immediately took a moor in Perthshire, and the first day bagged fifty brace. I cordially wished him joy, and felt convinced that a prolific moor was the place for a nervous shot with indifferent dogs.

Few will deny that the man who habitually brings home the heaviest game-bag has every claim to be called, if not the best shot, certainly the most accomplished sportsman of his party. To apply the test fairly, however, we must exclude those high-priced moors where good shooting *alone* is required, and stick to those second-rate beats where birds must be searched for with patient skill, and shot down with dexterity and *unfailing nerve.* The shooter who generally makes "the score" on such ground would only rarely find his shooting match with a fowling-piece all over the world.

The seasons 1864-65 (the two first of my lease of Kames and North Bute) were good breeding years, and the birds free of disease on most of the Scotch moors. By the 12th of the latter year they were very strong on wing, and, from unsettled broken weather, much wilder than usual. My team of sporting dogs was, however, most efficient, consisting of a brace of very superior Irish setters, an old English pointer bitch, admirable for close hunting, and a dropper (the cross of a celebrated Russian pointer dog with an excellent smooth bitch) which could work all day and never cry "enough." The whole four were hard workers, had exquisite noses, never got footsore, and were perfectly steady on all game. My retriever Auk completed the lot, and in my whole sporting experience I have only had one to surpass him.

Bad weather at the 12th does not annoy me, as I have no objection to allow a week or ten days' "cheeper law." In the year just referred to, I did not shoot till the 22d, and had the comfort of never hearing a squeak all day. The morning was dull, and heavy mists lowered on the peaks of Arran and the Argyllshire mountains. In face of this the barometer steadily rose, and being seconded by a few breaks of the clouds, it was decided to send forward the mid-day relief of dogs, with orders to return should the weather fail.

Scarcely had we left the lodge gate when a depressing drop of rain fixed all eyes on the horizon. A fine bit of blue, large enough even for a Hollander's tarpaulins, decided the point in favour of the day; but the "spitty" rain did not cease for some time, and was sufficiently damping to turn homeward the gillie and his dogs. He joyously faced about again, assuring us he would be at the farmhouse where we meant to put up our car almost as soon as we should. It was now about nine, and the lad's directions were to meet us on the hill with the provision-basket and fresh dogs at two o'clock.

At a quarter to ten I uncoupled on the crest of Clochnabae. The heather was at first so wet as to preclude immediate hope of close shots; but the sun was blinking out, and would soon make it dry enough. On circling round the hill, first one good pack, then another, each led by the jeering crow of the old cock, rose merrily in the very line of our range. At this moment a large red hare sprang up at my feet; and although unwilling to encumber my game-carrier with such lumber, I rolled her over in very spite. First blood of season 1865; but then it was only footed, not winged gore. Sun out now, and heath drying fast. Still another pack rose wild, and dogs beginning to look unhappy. Turned into the sunny side of the hill, where the raised packs had preceded me. Dogs ranging, free and true, but my first flying as well as running shot was fired without their aid. A fine pack rose at my feet, and I killed one, knocking feathers out of another with my second barrel—one of the few escapes of the day. First bird in the bag at half-past eleven.

The red Irishman now settled to a point, beautifully backed by the Saxon bitch. A fine chance, and slew my brace. The next pack, found by old Juno, rose sharp, but I got my couple of birds again. The canine, working with spirit, and supporting each other well, made no mistakes; and although much of the game rose provokingly wild, they procured me some excellent chances, and we met the gillie and relay of dogs with nine brace of fine full-grown birds.

The Glenmore valley cuts right through the farther hills of Bute. Hitherto I had kept to the north end, having parcelled out the southern division for the evening sport. Before crossing to the fresh range, I gave the ridge and sheltered face of the hunted hill a trial with the fresh dogs for broken birds. If a beat for scattered game has been judiciously chosen, and the shooter humours it by a series of circles and *détours* with the aid of trustworthy dogs, the bag rapidly and pleasantly fills.

When a young and impatient grouse-shooter, I had a useful lesson on scattered birds, which has often since encouraged me to perseverance and helped me to success. On that day, many years ago, I had reserved my best dogs for the evening, and after some successful morning shooting on the hill-top, had broken and scattered some fine packs. Most of the birds had topped the ridge slanting downwards, and I felt certain of heavy shooting whenever I had sufficiently worked the higher peaks. The steep ground and warm sun had been severe, and when I began to hunt for the scattered game, my dogs showed signs of having done their work. Still they fought bravely on, but, with the exception of a solitary cock, we did not stumble on any of the birds we had driven down. Feeling sure that we had passed through the midst of them, I proposed to take a second stretch along the brow with the evening dogs, even in the face of my watcher's protest that we should lose two valuable hours seeking for game that "wasna there." Scarcely were the fresh dogs free than they found grouse. Another and another point in quick succession, while the game, in threes, pairs, or single birds, rose at my feet. In place of two lost hours they were equal to any four of the rest of the day for regular and deadly chances. It was only the same over again in Bute, and my brow range of Clochnabae hill added three brace to the bag.

An old gamekeeper used to say at starting, "I'll try for so many brace, but dinna expec' aboon the half o't." I had set my bag at twenty brace, but did not "expec' aboon" fifteen. It was past four when we crossed the valley of Glenmore and scaled the evening hill, so to make eight brace on Bute moors in the few hours now at our service would tolerate few misses. Even of this short time more than an hour elapsed before we got among the packs; but when we did, the dropper behaved splendidly. Finding at long distance, and never making a false point, she gave us every opportunity to break the game on the very heights we had selected. The scent had been good all day, and at length the birds began to sit pretty well too. They were found by the dogs in their best style, while I seconded them by shooting at the top of my bent; and at a quarter to eight, the gillie threw up his "Glengarry" with a hurrah for the twenty brace.

My next grousing day, on the 26th, was devoted to the nearer moors of Kames. A high east wind spoilt the scent, and made the game still more fretty and shy of a point than on the 22d. My journal entry says—"Killed eleven brace; only let off one shot, and three badly-hit birds." On the 30th, was assisted by my eldest son, who had got a few days' leave from his regiment. Our united bag was twenty-one and a half brace, four hares, and a snipe. My journal again records —"Both of us shot in our best style, and dogs did their part equally well." Wednesday, September 6th, took a rambling stretch with my son over the greater part of our grouse-ground for his concluding day. At eleven o'clock heavy rain came on, and stopped our sport till nearly one; but the clouds then parted, a hot sun dried the heath, and the evening was perfect for shooting. Total bag, twelve and a half brace, eight hares, and a snipe. My share, six brace grouse and three hares. The above is an unexaggerated statement of the grouse sport that may be expected in Bute, with good shooting, good walking, and good dogs. If any of the three requisite *bons* fail, of course the bag will be proportionally diminished.

I never thought it worth while to take a whole day at partridges in Bute, as all the arable land lies in detached patches far apart from each other. My plan has always been to divide the day between black-game and partridge. My first day was on the farthest extremity of our shooting beat. "September 14th.—Had a low-game day on Skirles and the fields of Clochnabae. Bag contained four and a half brace of partridges, two and a half brace of black-game, a grouse, three hares, and a leveret." Two of the black-game were old cocks flying rapidly over my head at long distance. This is generally counted a difficult shot, but it is more properly a matter of calculation than difficulty. I found this out when a lad shooting wild ducks at evening flight. Whenever a paired duck and drake flitted overhead, the male, which always yields precedence, invariably dropped, while his mate in advance was certain to escape. Acting on my discovery, habit and practice soon made the necessary distance calculation quite natural; and now my first impulse, on seeing any bird flying towards me, is to note its speed and distance, and allow accordingly.

My second low-game day was to Robodach, a farm lying at the foot of the narrow part of the Kyles. Partridges bred well there in 1865, and every autumn an enormous flock of tempting but unapproachable black-game haunted the hillside, feeding morning and evening on the corn-stubbles. An unbroken heather-beat of six miles from Kames Castle ends in Robodach fields, so I shot along the moor-edge to this partridge-ground, killing on my way one and a half brace black-game, a grouse, and three large red hares. After two o'clock, with fresh dogs, I increased my bag by four and a half brace of partridges and another couple of hares. Oddly enough, made the same score of partridges on both beats, and with the same number of shots, for I only missed a second-barrel bird each day.

Most of the Robodach partridges, when sprung, having found safety in the copsewood flanking the stubble and turnip fields, on my next excursion to that ground I endeavoured to intercept the birds from their refuge. We were fortunate in forcing some good coveys into the hill-ground, where I had fair shooting, and made a score of eight brace—my largest partridge bag of the season. In this low shooting, the retriever backed up the gun by securing winged birds all but lost. Neither in wood, furze, turnip, nor potatoes did one wounded partridge foil this invaluable dog throughout the shooting.

But if the retriever did justice to the gun, the gun, in its turn, did justice to the shooter. I have never used a small fowling-piece that does more unfailing, deadly execution. It was made by Alexander Henry of Edinburgh, a short time before the "Henry rifles" acquired their fame. I had been telling Henry of a duck-gun made by his former chief, Mr Ross (who then had a monopoly of the Edinburgh gun trade), which for regularity of pattern and hardness of shooting I had never seen surpassed. He answered by offering to make for me a light gun to try against it, which I was to return if not pleased. The stocking of this gun, after the model of the Ross one, fitted me so well, that the first day I tried it in

Mull I bagged ten and a half brace of grouse (every bird I shot at), leaving off without a miss, and the very first brace of bagged birds were a fair right-and-left chance.

Although a number had died that year of disease, hares continued plentiful enough both on Kames and North Bute. We could generally each day kill as many as were convenient to carry, and rabbits were again on the increase, after having been nearly exterminated by hired warreners a few years before. Alpine hares had been introduced from Argyllshire, but I never yet moved one, although my watcher saw a couple at different times, after they had donned the snow-white fur. I did not regret their scarcity, for on my previous shooting they had swarmed into a perfect nuisance. You could only shoot there in comfort by always giving them the cut direct when they rose, and most certainly by refusing to honour them with a gun salute. The pointers or setters soon learned to follow my example, and were as callous to the antics and vagaries of these hares as if they had been sheep. When the grouse began to fight shy of our advances, we were fain to scrape up acquaintance with the blue-coats — now putting on their wintry livery—and with the aid of terriers and retrievers could any day load a pony and his panniers with them.

It is the belief of some naturalist authorities that Alpine and Irish hares are of the same species, and that any apparent difference is caused by variation of climate. They maintain that, on the colder mountains of Scotland, the Irish hare would grow white in winter, while the Scotch white hare would retain the summer blue on the Irish plains during the severest December and January snows. From close observation of both, I entirely dissent from this theory. The Irish hare is thinner in the fur, which has a dash of red very different from the summer mouse-blue of the Scotch hare; the body is more lightly made for the limbs; and having hunted them a whole season on the plains of Boyle, I can vouch for it that no Alpine hare would live before *foxhounds* half the time these Irish ones constantly do.

I have in my collection Alpine hares in summer and winter dress, together with an Irish one, and the difference is apparent to the most careless observer. I may also ask, why should not the mild air of Bute have prevented the two snowy specimens my watcher discovered from assuming their unsullied attire? White, in his 'Selborne,' records his satisfaction at the addition of the Alpine hare to the scanty animal catalogue of the British fauna, and would no doubt have protested against such summary swamping of it in the lineage of the Emerald Isle.

The same theory is broached with regard to our truly national red grouse and the willow grouse of Norway. Now, although there are strong points of resemblance both in the flight and summer plumage of the Norse bird to ours, there is this (to me) insuperable objection—viz., that no red grouse can exist without heather; and it also tells against the curtailers of species that the Scotch mountains should be cold enough to whiten [Irish (?)] hares and ptarmigan, and yet be too mild to perform the same office for willow grouse.

That hill partridges are distinct from lowland ones, which many sportsmen-naturalists assert, cannot be so strongly supported; but I have always thought that the wilder feeding-ground of the moor-edge bird has only dwarfed the old English partridge, and somewhat darkened its feathers.

Mire-snipes are pretty generally distributed over the moorlands and waste ground of Bute, and a good sprinkling of jacks are constant to certain reedy plashes all through the winter. When killed off, their vacancies are generally not long in being supplied.[1] The boast of the island, however, is the woodcock. The season of 1864-65 was reckoned the worst woodcock year which the natives remember, while the preceding one was the best. Several of the shepherds assured me that, in the winter of 1864-65, there was not one for ten of the previous season; and yet, in comparison with much of the cover-shooting I have rented, the woodcock sport of 1864-65 in Bute was really superior. With the exception of one distant snap, and taking all chances as they came, I had the good hap to bag the first fourteen woodcocks I fired at last winter. When hard frost set in, the average bag was from three to five couple, besides a fair score of other game. In a really good woodcock year, I have little doubt ten or twelve couple might easily be bagged on one day by a superior shot.

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[1] An old Argyllshire sportsman assured me lately that no retriever would carry a jack-snipe on account of its nauseous taste, of which the dog had the full benefit from being able to close its lips on the unsavoury morsel. Never having perceived this disgust to "jacks" in my retriever, I gave him a fair trial the first opportunity, which occurred on my next shooting-day. I dropped the

The variety of the early winter shooting of the Kyles keeps excitement alive, and adds zest to the sport. My diary of the 21st of November 1865 notes that my son and I killed grouse, blackcock, woodcock, wild duck, moor-hen, rabbit, and roe-deer. On the following Wednesday, the 23d, grouse, black-game, partridge, woodcock, snipe, hare, and rabbit.

Flying overhead, or pitched among the marshes, large flocks of golden plover and curlews sometimes give occasion for "a family shot." The former keep much among the higher hill-tops, while the curlews chiefly affect the waste ground close to the sea. Both breed freely on the Bute moors; and one summer, when a pair of curlews were screaming and dodging our path, my retriever made a sudden stop at my heel. On giving him leave, he coolly walked a little way and laid hold of what (from the commotion it made) I fancied a leveret. The prisoner, a young curlew, was delivered up

jack a good way off, loaded, and then desired the dog to fetch it. He carefully brought and laid it down at my feet, with every appearance of satisfaction and comfort. This is no doubt one of those retailed blunders which may pass muster long enough from not being challenged and proved false.

to me unhurt, and was nearly the size of its equally noisy parents.

A moor-lochan, imbedded among the very peaks of the North Bute hills, is the chosen resort of the moss-ducks. The loch is about half a mile in circumference, and its situation so retired as to attract, in addition to the ducks, about a score of herons. On account of the bare flat banks, stalking is impossible; but even were it otherwise, the herons seem to have constituted themselves the sentries of the loch, and, taking post all round it, their telescope necks effectually stop all stealthy intrusion. One day, when grouse-shooting round this loch, I noticed that the sentinels were absent. Coupling my setters, and giving them in charge of a gillie, I managed, by great care and waste of time, to fire a random shot into the thick of the flock when they flew. The chance was much too distant to injure their bodies, but a duck and drake dropped wing-broken into the water. Both made several dives, and finally disappeared at opposite sides of the loch. Confident in the painstaking caution of Auk, I desired him to search the bank, expecting a shot when the ducks rushed from their hiding into the water; but at the first round this experienced retriever found and secured both, without giving either the chance of making a dash from their concealment, which the slightest bungle on his part would have enabled them to do.

Not long after I had my revenge on one of the self-elected guardians of the ducks. Placing one of my sons a little below the outlet, where the flight, when disturbed, are apt to leave the fresh water for the sea, I showed myself on the top of a steep height on the opposite side. As soon as I appeared, the ducks knit together and took wing, but flew past the ambuscade quite out of reach. Like all very young sportsmen, the boy fired a warning to the ducks to take it high when again expelled from their city of waters. Now it happened that the herons were ranged like soldiers along the loch at the foot of the peak where I had attempted my strategy. Directly on hearing the report they climbed the air, and I had just time to cock one barrel and shoot a front-ranker; but had both barrels been on full bend, I could as easily have dropped his rear file with a second shot. The bird happened to be a fine male, and, *for a heron,* plump enough to prove that the Bull Loch fishmarket was well stocked.

Another company of herons haunted the opposite extremity of my shooting-beat during two seasons. Contrary to their usual habits and nature, these last frequented the bare hard moor, and appeared quite independent of loch, stream, or even morass. Like their neighbours, they always posted "a look-out," but were much tamer than herons usually are. To any fair and open passer-by they gave little heed; but the least appearance of scouting instantly raised their neck or put them to flight. I suppose they fed at night, and only rested on the moor. Since the railways began, several heronries in the neighbourhood of the lines have been deserted, and the refugees have settled on the trees of more secluded districts. The old heronry at Gartshore was abandoned at the very time when the trees in the gorge of the lonely Glen Fruin were appropriated by a colony of these birds.

With the exception of the never-failing mergansers fishing the shallow water of the coast, and a few waders on the shore, the seas around Bute seem to have no attraction for wild-fowl. This neglect of the many sheltered bays and shallows of the island seems strange, but of all birds it may most emphatically be said of sea-fowl, "There is no accounting for taste."

Roes and partridges are far more numerous in South Bute than on the northern division of the island which I rented. The copses of the Kyles, which so often helped the partridges to foil us, always, however, harbour a sprinkling of these beautiful little deer. Not wishing to disturb them much last winter, we had only one hunt, when I killed a very fine buck with a splendid head, and my son a large doe, both in prime order. In 1865, when beating for black-game, we stumbled on a pair of roes which had acquired such confidence in this forbearance as scarcely to heed the report of our guns.

The rod-fishing of Bute is confined to a few moor-lochs of moderate calibre; there are no fishing-streams deserving the name.

CORRACH-BAH; OR, A PLEA FOR THE WASTES.

How shrunk are Scotland's rugged untamed desolations! We see those mushroom larch-plantations skirting the steeps of our brown mountains, with their luxuriant verdure. The subsoil-plough, tile-draining, and all the ingenious *et-ceteras* of modern invention, have reclaimed many a bleak and barren moor, which once only served for pasture to the hardy black cattle, the unhoused hirsel of the hills. Thriving fields of yellow grain, and glancing sickles, and merry voices swelling the autumn gale, now enliven those wastes, once the chosen haunts of the bittern and the whaup. Many of the lords of the heather themselves have caught the improvement mania, and either modernise their "own grey tower" or pull it down—building a splendid mansion in its honoured stead. The wild feudo-Highland grounds and scenery must, of course, be made to fit this upstart of a house; and many a knoll, covered with its tangled brushwood, and blazing with the yellow gold of the whin and the broom, must be levelled and swept away, to convert the whole into an English lawn.[1]

In addition to this we have the new law of entail, which will go a good way to destroy our famed nationality; and by introducing moneyed strangers, who know nothing, and feel less, of sympathy with the Highland character, will (unwittingly, perhaps) do all they can to extirpate it altogether. It is melancholy to hear some *nouveaux riches*, at Radical meetings, spouting forth their untutored volubility upon this (to me) painful subject—"If the hereditary feudal lairds and lords cannot improve their estates, they ought to sell them to those who can!"—to those pioneers of civilisation, whose chief idea of a Highland estate is that of a *good bargain*, and whose notion of raising the Highland character consists in assimilating it to their own! They may give employment,[1] and money for money's worth, but all their efforts will be unavailing to transform the Gael into their *beau idéal* of a peasant; and never can they gain that place in his heart, only to be occupied by his feudal chief of ages past. Our Queen better knew her northern people, when, upon her first memorable visit to this *land of caterans*, she, like the great chieftainess, cast herself freely, fully, upon the unbought devotion of her clans.

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[1] "Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that wretched love of novelty which originates in selfishness, narrowness, and conceit, and *which especially characterises all vulgar minds*, there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affection for the signs of age, that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time."—'Modern Painters,' by John Ruskin, M.A.

Perhaps I feel too strongly on this subject; and I know I am open to the remark that feudalism implies dependence, while no feeling of this sort is compatible with improvement in character or country. But are we sure that *all* we term improvement is more than simple alteration? And is there one mountain-born son of Albyn who will not agree with me in preferring our unspoiled, unplanted glens, our wild game, and our national distinctness, to all the busy important bustle of modern civilisation, which has already transformed many of our most romantic nooks into models of "suburban villas"? I well recollect offering to show an exquisite specimen of real Highland taste and beauty, with all its wild character preserved, to a worthy metropolitan: his answer was, "Ah! thumthing in the Englith thtyle!!" He had ascended Ben Lomond shortly before. The day was lovely, only a few light clouds flitting over the brown heath or scattered rocks, between long intervals of brilliant sunshine: the lights and shadows upon the opposite mountains seemed formed to call up feelings and recollections of days long gone by. Our citizen, however, returned vastly delighted at having rather called up so good an appetite for dinner. After having satisfied his craving, he abruptly broke out, "Would it be pothible to fill up Loch Lomond?" His own genius anticipated the reply—"Ah! by tumbling Ben Lomond into it, I thuppothe! Now, how many acres of good land would you gain?" "Well," thought I, "this is improvement with a vengeance;" and I should, with great pleasure, have pitched in his little fat body, by way of a sleeping partner to the doomed mountain! However, upon thinking over his strange proposal, it struck me that it was a plain, matter-of-fact, pounds-shillings-and-pence view of the subject; and if I was fairly attacked upon that point, I should not stand half a chance in the argument. No doubt the country will be richer the more it is cultivated; but few Highlanders, with any touch of imagination, would barter, even for this, its former lonely and desolate grandeur, with its accompaniments of wild birds and animals; or would, without a pang, change the bold heart and ready hand of the natives into those of passive and obedient serfs. If driven to make a choice, I must shelter myself under the shrewd logic of a fellow-countryman, who, having affirmed that the grapes of Scotland were better than those of England, and being asked to prove it, coolly answered, "I maun premeese, I like them soor!" Like him, I must also premise, that I would not give the frowning crag or barren fell for all the rich slopes and verdant valleys of the Lowlands.

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[1] A great outcry has been raised against the "Highland clearances," and much obloquy cast upon the proprietors of some remote islands and localities for turning adrift their dependants. Many of these poor creatures, although suffering every privation, refuse to emigrate, even when given all reasonable encouragement. It is a hard case, but what *can* the lairds do? To give employment, by reclaiming such land, is out of the question, and to support such numbers of starving people would ruin the estate. The only resource, now that the kelp-trade has failed, is to reduce the population, at the same time enlarging the *grazing* farms (the surest return in the Highland districts), and giving leases to respectable *Highland* tenants.

In the recesses of the Black Mount forest, very considerably above the level of the sea, there is a moorland lochan, about a mile long by half a mile broad, called in Gaelic, Lochan Nahachalach; and a little to the east, connected by a rocky brook, is Loch Bah (the drowning loch), about three miles long by a mile broad. The shores of these lochs, if shores they may be called which consist of an occasional strip of yellow sand, are seldom trodden by any foot but that of the wild deer or the otter. Jagged points of rock continually obtrude themselves above the blue-grey water; and the eyrie of the sea-eagle fixed upon the top of an old birch, on a rugged heathery islet of Loch Bah, while another eyrie graces an aged Scotch fir of Loch Nahachalach, completes a picture so exquisitely savage, that fancy in its wildest mood could scarcely alter or amend. On the south these lochs are bounded by an extensive morass, full of small tarns, intersected by a pretty large moor-burn; and on the east of Loch Nahachalach a steep craggy hill rises abruptly from its side. An eyrie of the golden eagle is placed on a shelf of rock half-way up, and I have enjoyed the rare luxury of seeing both eyries at the same moment, and both queens in undisturbed possession of their thrones. Seldom any collision took place, each having her favourite hunting-ground. There was the mountain for the nobler bird, and the morass for her more vulture-shaped neighbour. They sometimes, however, had a battle in the air; but the looser form, the heavier movement, and the less daring spirit of the erne, made her no match for the mountaineer, who soon drove her screaming to her island.

In the distance may be discerned the dark forms of mountains belonging to that range called Corrach-Bah, a very favourite resort of the golden eagle. The corries which intersect them afford the richest pasture for the deer; and the hill-fox, the wild-cat, and the marten are not yet banished from those desolate precipices. It is not to be inferred, however, that the deer-forest is also a preserve for vermin. There is many a splendid hunt after the marten or the fox, which taxes the mettle both of men and dogs. And although there often are only the hounds and their quarry upon the bare mountains, and the echoes of the rocks to cheer them on, yet, to a lover of the pure picturesque, it is worth a hundred Lowland fox-hunts, with their red coats, horns, huntsmen, whippers, and all!

It was towards the end of April 1845 that, armed with my duck-gun to storm one of these eagle-fortresses, I sailed in the Loch Goil steamboat, on my way to these favourite haunts. I had also put up two trolling-rods in compliment to the *Salmo-feroces* of Loch Awe. We left the Broomielaw at seven o'clock on a fresh sunny morning, and paddled merrily down the Clyde. The fat rosy steward, with his quaint face of good-nature, was in high feather, and frequent in his assurances that we might expect "a pleesant sail." Under his auspices we were soon seated at a good breakfast of whitings taken out of the firth the night before. By the time we had discussed them, we were coasting the shingly beach of Loch Long; and having touched at Ardentinny, and viewed the fairyland of Glenfinart, its emerald lawn, and rampart of brown hill and tangled wood, we struck into the bleak Loch Goil. A short time brought us alongside of its primitive quay, where we deposited ourselves and luggage in the mongrel kind of coach, half boat half omnibus, which was to convey us across the isthmus separating Loch Goil from Loch Fyne. Creeping up one side of the hill at a tortoise pace, we rattled down the other at a gallop, by way of a change. A very small steamboat plies between St Catherine's and Inverary, and I was in the act of superintending the embarkation of my chattels, when a bustling official assured me that he would see them all safe. I put faith in him, and immediately began a discussion with two fellow-travellers about the whale that had been harpooned shortly before in the loch—or the hill of Duniquoich—or the Duke's Castle—or I don't recollect what. Upon landing at Inverary my trolling-rods were missing, and no "satisfaction" to be had, as my officious friend was safe on the opposite shore, and my poor rods lying within tide-water mark! The landlord of the Argyll Arms, however, obligingly offered to send the ferry-boat and forward them next morning by the post[1] to Cladich, where I hoped to bivouac for a few days after my eagle campaign.

Having dined with my two agreeable companions, we hired an open carriage and drove to Cladich, where we parted—they going on to Oban by Port Sonachan, and I to the Black Mount. After a long, rugged, but enjoyable drive, partly along the banks of Loch Awe, where the cuckoo was heard in every dell, or was seen poising himself upon some still leafless patriarchal thorn, and partly through the environs of the forest, I arrived at the solitary little inn of Inveroran. The forester's house was within a short distance; so I arranged with him that we should start by daylight next morning for the eagle's eyrie, partook of Highland cheer in a snug little Cyclops of a parlour, ornamented with the horns of the red deer, and then retired to my dormitory.

Day was just breaking when I crossed the river Tulla, on my way to Peter Robertson's[2] cottage. He was standing before his door, consoling himself for his early start by a pipe of very strong tobacco. The morning was all we could wish, —calm, grey, and mild. As we passed the banks of the loch, roe-deer were quietly cropping the greensward which sloped to the water's edge, and now and then a fine buck would raise his head and look listlessly over his shoulder, as if wondering what business we had to be so soon astir. The black-cock, surrounded by his hens, was crooning his matins on the tops of the knolls, and was answered by the red-cock with many a cheery but eccentric call, from the more distant heights. A male hen-harrier was flitting stealthily above the heather, seeking his breakfast where it would be easily found, with small chance of human company at his morning meal. Now and then an Alpine hare would canter lazily away, or raise herself upon her hind legs to listen, moving about her inquisitive ears.

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[1] Generally a stout hale carle, of middle age, who walks from ten to fifteen miles and back again in a day, with the mail-bag slung at his back. The first time one of these primitive posts was dignified with a little gig equipage, he came in late, and made excuse that "he was taigled wi' a gig!" Of course he was turned off. Poor Sandy Bell had walked twenty-seven miles a-day for thirty years of his life, and at his dismissal was fresh as May. He bitterly complained that he lost, first his bread, "by thae new-fangled nonsense," and then his health, for want of exercise. He is only an instance among many who have been ruined by *cutting a dash.*

[2] This model Highland deer-stalker died in the spring of 1877. He had long been a martyr to rheumatism, and the rough work of his life had told sorely on him for years before his end. Many a happy day I have passed with him, wandering over the rough hills and wild corries, or by the lonely lochans of the Black Mount forest.

For some miles we walked along the road which intersects the lower end of the forest, when Peter suddenly turned into its gloomy depths. Small flocks of deer now crossed us frequently, and sometimes a large herd would saunter past at a slow walk. Occasionally we saw their profiles on the crests of the mountains, or at feed, dotted along some distant corrie, in appearance no bigger than roes.

Peter had been entertaining me with many a hunting anecdote, or with the natural history of some of the wild denizens of the forest, when the first streak of the rising sun struck the gaunt head of a bald cliff in the centre of the mountains of Corrach-Bah. "Now, sir," suiting the action to the word, "in that craig is your eagle." A threatening crag it was; from the view I got, it seemed as steep as the side of a house from top to bottom. For the first time I felt a slight misgiving, lest the shot might be crank and difficult when the bird flew out of such a rugged mass. What if I should miss! However, I banished these craven thoughts, and marched on merrily as before.

We were still a long mile from our rocks, when a dark bird rose in the midst of them, and winged his way to the opposite mountain. Was he a buzzard? No; small as he appears, that determined flight, and free flap of the wing, can belong to no bird but the eagle. Peter looked carelessly at him. "Yon's the cock: he'll be for the opposite hill, after bringing the hen her breakfast." He now whipped out his glass, and placing his back upon a hillock, and the glass upon his knee, looked long and anxiously through it. At last, jumping up, shutting the glass with a satisfied jerk, and looking to me with a smile, "She's on, sir." I now took his place, but it was some time, in spite of Peter's minute directions, before I could discern the eyrie. "Look, sir, to the side o' yon bushes in the face o' the craig." It was easy enough to see *them;* they seemed "moored" not "in the *rifted*" but in the *solid* "rock." When I at length detected the eyrie, it appeared no bigger than a rook's nest; and how Robertson had discovered "she was on," I was a good deal puzzled to find out. But he told me to keep my eye upon the east side of the nest, and I should see a black ball which would seem higher at some times than others, and which was caused by the eagle raising her head. My qualms returned; I saw that the eyrie was about thirty yards down in the cliff, that my footing would not be firm, and that, if the bird were so inclined, she might dash into the abyss with the speed of the wind. Peter, however, was talkative as ever, evidently in high glee that there was every chance of a shot.

We now struck off to the left, as if walking away from the eyrie. Having taken a long circuit we edged in, till we got a slope of the mountain between us and our quarry. This achieved, we walked rapidly round till we came to its base, at the side opposite to that where the noble bird was sitting in perfect security and peace. Peter now climbed slowly up, continuing his stories to most inattentive ears. I had some faint recollection, afterwards, of a curious bird with extraordinary feet, which frequented the forest, whose history he was relating with great animation just when he gained the ridge of the mountain. There, however, all his tales were at an end. He at once relapsed into the cool and wary hunter. Creeping forward with promptitude and decision, he knew, to an inch, where to look for the eyrie among all that fantastic chaos of rocks. Beckoning me to advance, he showed the outer sticks of the nest, and pointed to a rock close to us, where lay a grouse nearly devoured, and a ptarmigan beautifully picked, but with the skin unbroken. Our attack upon the eagle began by plundering her storehouse ; for Peter, rolling up the ptarmigan in his handkerchief, pocketed it as a *bonne bouche* for dinner. We now held a consultation as to the easiest way of approach. Scrambling down a hollow, we were within fifty yards of the eyrie, when a ravine intercepted our progress. I pointed to a little bank of ochre-coloured moss beyond. "That's the place," whispered Peter. Back we ducked again, over the same ground, and, crawling along the ridge, evaded the ravine. The critical moment of failure or success was now arrived. With my left knee on the bank of moss, and my right foot planted against a rock, to prevent a slip on the steep,—my eye fixed on the outer rim of the eyrie, and Peter, mute as a stone but sharp as an arrow, awaiting the signal,—I stopped a moment to take breath. A slight nod over my shoulder, and Peter gently struck the palms of his hands together, pat—pat. It was just enough for the eagle to hear, but it seemed very loud to me. Pat—pat—pat, louder and louder. I was now getting very nervous. "Throw a stone at her!" Peter had too much generalship for that. He selected a small pebble, and threw it on the steep, directly above the eyrie. I watched every hop of the stone, lower and lower, till I saw that it must drop straight upon our victim. I knew it was now or never. Instantly, I caught sight of the bold flap of a giant wing, and the mighty bird soared majestically from the dizzy chasm. The shot was not difficult. I may say that my aim was cool and determined. She reeled round and round, and fell headlong into the yawning abyss, quite dead. I now took a long breath, and but for Peter's delighted face, could scarcely persuade myself she had fallen. If he had either hallooed loud or thrown straight at the eagle, she would most likely have dashed out, wheeling and tumbling —an uncertain and difficult shot. Fain would I have secured the eggs, but this was impossible without ropes, which we had neglected to bring. Peter, however, offered to send them to Cladich the next day.

I was now impatient to secure my prize. We had to descend the sloping ridge, and come round in front, at the base of the chasm. It was, certainly, a lordly fortress—a fit abode for this marauding Thane of the Wastes. Flanked by bastions and buttresses of massy rock, which guarded the stronghold on either side, and keeping watch upon its rugged eminence, the eagle's sleepless eye could detect the most minute or distant object in the valley beneath.

We searched the rough ground at the foot of the precipice for some time, without discovering the dead eagle. Indeed we both fancied that she had dropped much farther off than was actually the case. At last I discovered the red-brown feathers, like a large tuft of her own heather, close to the foot of the cliff. A finer specimen could not be seen; the markings were perfect, and the plumage in first-rate order.

The sun had now risen high and clear, the surrounding mountains looked low, warm, and blue. I was now gay as Peter, and, while we tramped over moor and moss, I made him repeat his forest tales. I found that the "extraordinary feet" he had so minutely described belonged to the night-jar, which bird, however, is rarer in the forest than in more cultivated localities. Some of his anecdotes of eagles were really worth notice, as illustrating the strength and ferocity of the bird. A couple, cock and hen, were trapped at the same bait by Robertson. As they were not seriously injured, he wished to bring them home alive. This would have been an impossibility to most people, as there is but one way of carrying them with any degree of safety: it is by placing the enormous creature under your arm, and holding his legs, immediately above the huge claws, firmly in your hand. As long as you walk steadily, and do not shake him roughly, the eagle will remain still, and make no effort to escape. But if you stumble, or turn sharply round, it is ten to one that he fixes his talons to the bone in your thigh. Robertson was carrying the two birds in this manner, and, having come a long way, his arms became cramped, and he was trying to relieve them by leaning upon a stone-dyke, when one of the savage creatures struck its claw into his leg. The pain was great, but he knew that if he attempted to extricate himself he would lose both birds. So, Spartan-like, he patiently waited till some assistance should turn up. On looking down the road he saw a packman slowly padding along; but in trying to accelerate the man's professional pace by a loud shout, he shook the hen-bird and she immediately repeated the attack on his other thigh. He was now fairly pinioned, and the pain scarcely bearable. At last the pedlar came up, but his horror was so great at poor Peter's predicament, that he only stared in blank dismay. "Toot, man, tak' ma knife oot o' ma pocket, and cut open this beast's claw." This was done with some difficulty. "Noo, gang roond on the ither side, an' ye'll fin' anither job." The man, who had no idea that Peter was grappled on both sides, quickly obeyed, muttering, "Saw I ever sic sorrows o' birds in a' ma life!" Both eagles were brought safe home, but Peter assured me that he was unable to walk for many a day.

Another story of a prisoned eagle vindicating his dignity has so much of the comic about it, that we forgive the savage revenge. A raw-boned Highlandman came to Robertson's house:—"Is your faither at hame?" "No," said one of his children. "Hasna he a tame aigle?" The little girl pointed out the place where it was confined. There was a hole cut at the bottom of the door, where its food was thrown in. Donald peered cautiously into the hole : quick as light, the eagle seized his nose, and it was only by a severe struggle, and by the cartilage giving way, that he effected his escape. When Peter came home, he found him sitting in a doleful plight ; but having comforted him with a dram, and patched up his nose with sticking-plaster, he sent him away with his curiosity quite cured about eagles.[1]

I mention one more to show the power of the bird when a mere nestling. Peter and two shepherds had gone to take an eaglet from the nest. The eyrie was a little way from the top of the cliff. Peter descended to it by a rope ; one of the shepherds was a little above him ; and the other, who had a very weak head, stipulated for a secure berth at the top. Peter passed the eaglet to the first man, who, in like manner, gave it safely to him at the top. But—he having most likely given it a nervous twitch—it seized him fiercely. Down he fell on his back, dread of toppling over into the abyss drowning all sense of pain. Up came the other shepherd ; but when he saw the man moaning and helpless, he was seized with such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that he could give no assistance. When Peter reached the top, he drew man and eaglet upon firm ground, and then extricated the claw. As soon as he found himself upon level ground and free, he rushed at his jocose neighbour, and Peter had some difficulty in preventing a battle. It was a mortal affront to mention an eagle in this man's presence ever after.

But we have now got back to Peter's cottage. Loch Tulla lies glistering under a burning sun: I see the landlord at Inveroran curiously peeping round the corner, anxious to discover whether we had returned empty-handed. My appetite also warns me that it is past nine; so, having appeased it by a subsoil of "halesome parritch," and a top-dressing of fresh eggs, "Now, landlord, out with the 'shan-dra-dam.'"[1]

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[1] It will hardly be believed, but is nevertheless true, that when a male and a female eagle were confined in the same cage, the latter, always much the larger and more powerful bird, devoured its mate in a fit of hunger ! The same unnatural cannibalism was seen by my son in the fox. At Minnesota he caught three cubs, keeping them in the same kennel. The strongest always drove away the others from the food-dish, and consequently soon grew to be a third larger than its companions. The man who looked after them forgot to bring their food for several days, and when my son went to the fox-house, expecting to find the poor creatures dead or dying, he descried the large one sitting comfortably on its tail, its sides distended to an enormous extent, and the remains of the other two beside him ! The wretch was inflated by his own kith and kin.

My jolting drive to Cladich in my "chariot" was not over till towards two o'clock, but the keen air of the mountains had completely effaced the recollection of my solid breakfast. I therefore ordered a mutton-chop, and went to the shore to examine my craft. I had already bespoken the services of old Sandy M'Kenzie, "wha kens whaur the big fish lie as weel as ony man on Loch Ow side." Sandy being appointed skipper, begged to be allowed to choose his own crew, which consisted of a stout, good-natured "callant" of about sixteen, yclept "Johnny,"—occasionally "Jock," when Sandy was in a patronising mood. Sandy was once a strong bony man, and piqued himself upon being one of the best wrestlers in the country. Now his eye is dim and filmy, much the colour of a boiled onion, and his athletic arm is paralytic and weak as a child's. I might have had far abler men at the oar, and as knowing about the haunts of the fish; but whenever I troll Loch Awe, none but that poor, ragged, woe-begone old man shall command my boat so long as he is able to do it.

Having satisfied myself that the cobles were not *more* leaky than they generally are, I returned to the inn. Monzie's keeper had been there to see my eagle, so I asked his leave to shoot a couple of ring-dotterels which were tippeting on a green bank close to the boats. This he at once civilly agreed to. All was now ready for the evening fishing.

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[1] The name given by a rural minister of the Kirk, who sported one of these vehicles, to a little spring-cart with a seat across for the "dames." The "minister's man" could never be persuaded to attempt this learned word, and would persist, in spite of him, to call it his "*chariot*," as the nearest Scripture authority he could master.

Johnny carried my trolling-rods; Sandy a "cogue-fu'" of live bait, and a little basket of provisions; and I my duck-gun, loaded with No. 6 for the dotterels. Poor little fellows! They looked so pretty that it was a shame to fire at them. But as I had no specimen in my collection, I could not resist the temptation of stringing both at a shot. One lay; but the other, being only wing-broken, ran into the water with so light and graceful a step, that it seemed as if walking on glass. The rods were soon baited, the evening was perfect for fishing, and the *feroxes* took well. We came over no large ones, however, and the three brought into the boat were only four, three, and two and a half pounds. We had intended to troll to the bay of old Castle Connal, eight miles down the loch, built, as Sandy says, by the Danes, but were obliged to defer it till next day, The bay which this castle commands is a famous resort of the largest size of the *ferox*. When we fish it, Sandy always tells a story of one of the Lochiels, who had been taken captive by a hostile clan, and confined there. His jailor had an annuity during his lifetime. The Camerons, however, found out where he was concealed, and came down in a body. As soon as the wretch saw them, he stabbed him with his penknife, having no other weapon at hand, expecting a reward for his atrocity—which, no doubt, he received.

Night overtook us before we could gain the harbour of Cladich, *alias* the Burn-foot, which is the only safe anchorage in case of a storm. And, indeed, it is very difficult to bring up a boat anywhere else, the coast being so shallow. The entrance to this burn is so intricate, that a man rowing in and out every day may be completely puzzled after dark. "Johnny," by some hieroglyphic shadowy marks of the trees upon the water, known only to himself, at last piloted us safely through, and was "Jock, my man," till we got to the inn.

The old dun eight-day clock had just "chapped" seven, when my gallant crew cleared out of harbour, and, with my rods, bait, provisions, and pea-jacket, were making for Port Sonachan quay, where I had directed them to meet me. The morning was colder, the wind had changed from west to east —“ a bad airt ” for the fish. There were certain appearances also in the sky which foreboded squally weather. The best of the fishing-ground is below Port Sonachan, so I did not wish to waste time, on such an unpropitious day, until we got there. I sauntered dreamily along, admiring the views as they unfolded themselves, and had sat for some time on Port Sonachan shore, listening to a chorus of cuckoos, before the measured stroke of Sandy and Johnny appeared at some distance, slowly propelling their clumsy boat. I question if I gained much time by my manœuvre, though Sandy appeared quite satisfied with the rate of their progress. I was soon seated in the stern, with lovely baits towing behind. “ No’ a rug,” as Sandy repeatedly said; but he endeavoured, poor fellow, to keep up our spirits by telling a tale of every wood, hill, or rock we crept slowly past. “ There’s the badger’s rock, sir; he has never left it for the last fifty year.” The grey hermit of the rock called me back to my boyish days. The “ brock-holes ” in the oak wood—the traps my brothers and I had purloined from the old keeper, who preferred killing vermin by the lazy method of the gun—my delight when I detected the first poor captured badger,—all rose fresh before me, as in those sunny mornings of life’s early spring. My brothers and I had been brought up in the country, and were hunters from our childhood. Our couple of terriers were game as flint, and yet they were never able to draw a badger from his natural fastness. I have heard them hold one to bay for hours, in the inmost recesses of his earth. On one occasion, when a favourite terrier had teased the poor animal for a long time, it slyly followed, and when the dog was within a yard of the hole’s entrance, bit his hind leg to the bone. This harassing of the rear of a retreating enemy showed tactics on the part of the old grey friar that we could scarcely have expected. I once brought home a half-grown cub which had wandered from the hole, rolling it up in my jacket. (What will boys not do ?) It soon became so tame as to eat beetles and humble-bees from our hands, and would lap up porridge and milk like a dog. I well recollect—for it was a job that cost us no small trouble—digging out an old she-one. To the last she kept the dogs at bay; and even when we heard the growl within a couple of yards, they were unable to dislodge her. Whenever we struck into the wide cell, they dashed in upon her, and inflicted such injury that she soon died. There were two cubs about a week old, which made a low, chirping squeak. The cell where they were was round, hard, and dry, about two feet in height, by four or five yards in circumference. There was no food in it. Many a badger we trapped, and, I verily believe, were as proud of the brock-holes as an Indian chief of his finest hunting-ground. Those that we trapped soon learned to take part of the dog's supper. We never saw them eat grass or hay, and should as soon have thought of giving such food to a dog as of insulting them with it. What they call "badger's hay-making" is neither more nor less than the rooting up of the moss, which they are obliged to do to get at beetles, grubs, &c., among its roots. This dries, and the badger brings home a little for its winter bed. We used to notice as much of this hay made as would suffice for a good-sized stack, and more than would fill up every badger's hole in the country. I need scarcely say that what they carried was never missed.

My reveries were now broken by Sandy pointing out the nest of the "salmon-tailed gled," and there are the owners wheeling their graceful circles. Two roes were also looking at us from the shore, and another a little farther on. They seemed not the least afraid, as we pulled slowly past. I was admiring the beautiful hanging wood, in which the kite's nest held a prominent place near the top of one of the finest old oaks, when a pull, that bent my rod's top to the water, and spun round my large wooden pirn, brought me to my legs at a spring. To seize the rod and place the butt above my knee, with a good bend at the top, was the work of an instant. Sandy was also active: he gave both oars to Johnny, and began, with his shaky hands, to wind up the other rod out of the way, in case of a collision. I told him always to do so when I hooked a trout. At this moment the gorgeous fish sprang a yard out of the water, coming down with a splash that made the rocks echo. Sandy, at no time very expert, became quite nervous at sight of the monster, and bungled his work sadly. I gave him a push out of my way, and in so doing knocked off his tattered hat into the water at the bottom of the coble. He only smiled, without a vestige of anger. I saw his thin grey hair, and am happy to recollect that at that exciting moment, ashamed of my impatience, I picked up his hat with my left hand, and placed it on his head, poor Sandy all the time begging me "never to heed it." Sandy's whole heart was in the capture of the fish. His rod was by this time wound up, he was again at the oar, and I had fair play. The *ferox* bored like a harpooned whale; sometimes he would change his course, and go down to the bottom, taking forty yards of line, which he made swirl through the water with a humming noise, like a low sound of the telegraph wires. When I shook him up, he would fight away for the middle of the loch. At length he grew weaker, and I got him under command of a short line. It was a beautiful sight—that noble fish, sometimes showing his glancing scales for a moment, and then trying to bore under the boat, and always foiled by the boatmen, who promptly obeyed my slightest signal. He now began really to fail, and I felt I could lead him; so, directing Sandy to a shingly part of the shore, where there were no rocks, I determined to land him there. The beach was very shallow; and, in spite of my remonstrances, Sandy walked up to his knees in water, and drew the coble ashore. I was now on *terra firma*, but my fish was by no means done up yet. Every time that I brought him to the shallow, he dashed away with as much vigour as before. This could not last; and the bursts became shorter and slower, till my victim was unable to get down at all, and only struggled on the top of the water. I had ample opportunity to admire his dimensions, colour, and shape, and was determined that no rashness or eagerness to obtain it should rob me of so rich a prize. At last he turned upon his broad and gleaming side. Now was my time. And like a wrecked and gallant vessel he lay stranded on the beach!

A proud man was Sandy M'Kenzie then. He took entire possession of the fish, and would hardly let Johnny look at it: if he ventured to touch it, he met a stern rebuke. Well did Sandy know how rare it was to come across a trout of that size in Loch Awe nowadays, and all the fishing guides there are as proud of their gentlemen's performances as if they were their own. They reckon their honour concerned, and banter each other about the failure of their employers as reflecting upon their own want of knowledge of the haunts of the fish.

We now sat down upon a green bank, close to the Gled's Nest wood, and had out our little basket of refreshments. I gave Sandy a plentiful supply for both. "Now, Sandy, eat your fill, and give Johnny the leavings." This is a favourite joke with Sandy, and Johnny is obliged to shield himself from its point by chuckling as heartily as he can. The Glenlivet was soon uncorked; and when I was taking my modicum, mixed with the clear water of the spring, I overheard Johnny complaining of the scarcity of the "sma' stells which were ance thick eneuch on Loch Ow," and reprobating the tryanny of our rulers, "wha hinnered folk frae doin' what they liket best theirsels wi' their ain pickle barley." Sandy likes his whisky raw, but is "*very fond o' a drap water after't!*" The first time I gave him a glass into his paralytic hand, he spilt about two-thirds. I now insist upon holding the glass to his mouth myself. This indignity Sandy resisted at first, but I was peremptory, and he now contrives to keep me between him and Johnny, who is slyly keeking round. When he has got his glass, however, he seems to think it a good job well over, and occasionally attempts some wit. I never like to see his sorrowful face then, or even to hear his joke; it seems as if uttered in bitterness of heart. I could not resist having a peep into the kite's nest. She had no eggs yet, but all was ready for them, plenty of soft warm odds-and-ends for the lining. The two birds, balancing themselves at a great height above, kept strict watch over our movements. It is a great pity that the kite has become so rare, for it always gives a sort of finishing touch to our pine-clothed hills.

The breeze had freshened. The squalls had settled into a steady gale, and we were fully seven miles from Cladich. I wished, at least, to try some of the best ground on our way home, having little hope of pulling the whole distance against such a head-wind. Sandy, however, was unable to make any way; and upon Johnny's complaining that the boat was drifting back, fairly gave in. I had always relieved the old man when we had to cross the loch, or go quickly past bad fishing-ground, upon which occasions I used to hear Johnny taunting him. When I took the oar, Sandy always had his revenge by, "You've met your match noo, lad." Since it was impossible to fish any of the way back, I dried my lines along the shore, and determined to enjoy the lonely walk to the inn. The road for some miles was a steep mountain-track, which seemed only fitted for a flock of goats. On some parts of this dismal region the sun seldom shines, and on others scarce a ray penetrates all the winter. The whole hill was studded with ragged rocks and stones, and a more dreary path could hardly be imagined—gloomy without grandeur. Slowly we plodded to accommodate old Sandy, whose short breath effectually stopped his wild legends.

We had nearly gained the summit, from which there is a charming view of the loch, when Johnny, who had sauntered on a few paces before, stopped suddenly, and pointing to a little bing of stones—"This is the Tinkler's Cairn." "'Deed, no," says Sandy, with an air of superior knowledge; "I'll show the Tinkler's Cairn." And stumping on a few paces further, "This is the very bit where the tinkler was murdered." I felt a thrill of horror. A more appropriate place for a deed of blood could not have been chosen; it looked like haunted ground, so bleak and bare and lonely, with its stern rocks of perpetual gloom. After carefully examining the little cairn of stones, which is always reared over the spot where a dead body is found upon the mountains, I asked Sandy to relate the story, the substance of which is as follows: A tinker and his termagant wife had long travelled the country. He was much older than his wife, who was a woman of immense muscular power, and nearly six feet high. "The puir body," said Sandy, "had little peace wi' her. A perfect she-deevil was Kirsty; I kent her weel. Mony a day after the deed was done she travelled the country, and her sons are to the fore yet." One day the tinker and his wife left Cladich, and took their course over this mountain. From what motive is not known, but when they came to this spot, she seized a stone, murdered her wretched husband, then coolly walked on to the next shieling, where she slept, and in the morning pursued her way through the hills. A shepherd soon after discovered the poor tinker, lying stark and gory upon his cold hard bed. The woman was taken up, but was dismissed for want of evidence. Life was held light in the Highlands in those days, and soon little was said or thought about the poor lost tinker or his tyrant mate.

I felt relieved to quit this dismal scene, and to descend the more sunny side of the hill. We were now threading the waving woods of Sonachan and Rock Hill, where the blithe mavis was pouring its evening melody from the topmost bough of many a tall pine or shadowy beech. I took the opportunity of explaining to Johnny that the large "stells" paid a deal o' money to Government, which they could not do if the little ones were allowed to compete and pay nothing; that Government paid an army with this money to keep the French from coming over, and taking him where he would never see a glass of whisky more: that if he objected to pay soldiers in this way, he must e'en go and be a "soger" himself for nothing, to prevent the aforesaid French inroad. This last piece of logic evidently had some effect; and I question if Johnny will long for the strong waters of "Loch Ow" the next time he is so fortunate as to be presented with a glass from the large "stells" of Glenlivet or Glen Islay.

When I arrived at Cladich, my first step was to order in the steelyard, when my fish proved 15½ lb. odd, so must have been nearly seventeen when taken out of the water. I had killed in Loch Vennachar, the year before, with single gut, a clean salmon which weighed 17 lb. when brought home. This salmon did not make nearly so fierce a run as the Loch Awe trout with gimp. I have heard gentlemen speak slightingly of the best trout when compared with salmon; but let them have one of these Loch Awe monsters on their hooks, in as good condition as mine was, and I venture to say they will not complain of the want of mettle in the trout. I have no doubt that the *Salmo ferox* is superior, both in strength and spirit, to the *Salmo salar*. Unless the *ferox* is in first-rate condition, his head is very ugly, and looks much too large for his body. This was not the case with the specimen I have just described; his head is smaller, and his shoulder more round than any I have ever taken; on which account I had him preserved by Fenton[1] in George Street, Edinburgh.

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[1] Tommy Fenton emigrated to America years ago. He was the best artist in his trade I ever saw. Having studied the creatures in their native hills, he was unrivalled at positions.

I took the road at five next morning, to be in time for the Inverary steamboat, which left at seven; but even at that early hour, poor Sandy, with his fragment of a hat in his hand, was waiting at the "brae-fit" to wish me a "gude journey." Having shaken him heartily by the hand, I turned my back, for a time, upon these cherished scenes of beauty, grandeur, and romance.

ON EAGLES.

Few sportsmen who have been much in the wilds of Scotland have not occasionally seen an eagle; but except at the hatching season, it is extremely difficult to get a shot at one. Even then it is no easy task, for the nest is often in the face of some precipice very difficult to scale.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

The golden eagle is not nearly so great a foe to the farmer as to the sportsman; for although a pair, having young ones, will occasionally pounce upon an unprotected flock, and continue their depredations until scared away, their more usual prey consists of hares, rabbits, and grouse—a fact sufficiently proved by the feathers and bones found in their eyries. A pair used to build every year in Balquhidder, another in Glen Ogle, and a third in Glen Artney. The shepherds seldom molested the old ones; but by means of ladders, at considerable risk, took the young and sold them. One of these, brought to Callander in 1838, when scarcely full-fledged, would seize a live cat thrown to it for food, and bearing it away with the greatest ease, tear it to pieces, the cat unable to offer any resistance, and uttering the most horrid yells.

I recollect, when a boy, an eyrie in Glen Luss, where a pair hatched yearly; but since the female was shot, no others have frequented the place. The shooting of this eagle was a service of great danger, and the man who undertook it a most hardy and determined fellow. The cliff was nearly perpendicular, and the only way of access was over the top, where a single false step would have sent him headlong into the gulf below. After creeping down a considerable way, he saw the eagle sitting on her eggs, a long shot off; but his gun was loaded with swan-shot, so, taking a deliberate aim, he fired; she gave one shrill scream, extended her wings, and died on her nest. His greatest difficulty now was, how to avail himself of his success. He was not, however, the man to be balked; so, at the most imminent risk, he managed to get to the eyrie, tumbled the eagle over the cliff, and pocketed the two eggs. They were set under a hen, but did not hatch.

When two eagles are in pursuit of a hare, they show great tact—it is exactly as if two well-matched greyhounds were turning a hare—as one rises the other descends, until poor puss is tired out: when one of them succeeds in catching her, it fixes a claw in her back, and holds by the ground with the other, striking all the time with its beak. I have several times seen eagles coursed in the same way by carrion-crows and ravens, whose territories they had invaded: the eagle generally seems to have enough to do in keeping clear of his sable foes, and every now and then gives a loud whistle or scream. If the eagle is at all alarmed when in pursuit of his prey, he instantly bears it off alive. Where alpine hares are plentiful, it is no unfrequent occurrence, when the sportsman starts one, for an eagle to swoop down and carry it off, struggling, with the greatest ease; in this case, he always allows the hare to run a long way out of shot before he strikes, and is apt to miss altogether. When no enemy is near, he generally adopts the more sure way of tiring out his game.

The method of the golden eagle in destroying red-deer calves is exactly akin to the *reflection* of the royston and carrion-crows, when breaking the shells of mussels. After pouncing upon the deer calf, and finding the impossibility of bearing it away to a distance, the eagle makes as short work as possible by climbing to a great height in the air, when its victim is dropped, and killed by a dash against the rocky ground. Instantly descending, it feeds voraciously, and never leaves off until either completely gorged or driven away. Next day it is pretty certain, about the dawn, to return for the remainder.

I once witnessed a touching instance of the attachment of an eagle to her young, which, like the child of some bloodthirsty chief, alone had the power to touch the single chord of tenderness and love in the heart of its cruel parent. I had wounded her mortally as she flew from her eyrie, quite unconscious of her having hatched an eaglet. Next day she returned to the foot of the rock, although not able to reach her nest—the feelings of a mother being stronger in her savage breast than either the sense of present pain or the dread of further danger.

There is often only one egg in the nest, but when there are two, one is frequently addled. It is a curious fact that, in the year 1847, when there was a dreadful hurricane about the end of April, no eggs were laid in either the sea or golden eagles' eyries of the Black Mount forest.

The enormous nests of the golden and sea eagles are pretty much alike; the outer rim being composed of thick boughs, and the whole not unlike the shape of a large-sized round table. The golden eagle always has its eyrie among rocks, while the erne chooses an old tree for inland incubation. On the bold rocky coast, where suitable trees are scarce, it follows the example of the mountaineer, and generally builds in the cliffs.

The colour of the golden eagle differs very much; some are so dark as almost to justify the name of "the black eagle," which they are often called in the Highlands; in others the golden tint is very bright; and many, even, are of a muddy brown. I do not think that the age of the bird has anything to do with this, as I have seen the colour in young and old equally variable. The sure mark of a young one is the degree of white on the tail: the first year the upper half is pure, which gradually becomes less so by streaks of brown; about the third or fourth year no white is to be seen.

THE SEA-EAGLE.

The sea-eagle is rather larger than the golden, and of a lighter brown. The bill, which is longer and broader, but not so hooked as in the other, is of a dull yellowish white. The whole of the tail-feathers of the young ones are brown, when they gradually change to white, which is complete about the fourth year—the very reverse of the golden eagle. The tail is also shorter, and the legs are not feathered to the toes, like the other; but quite enough to show that the bird was not intended to subsist by fishing, like the osprey, whose legs are bare to the thighs, which have only a thin covering of short feathers.

As this bird does not complete its mature plumage till the fourth season, there was much confusion regarding it even among scientific naturalists—some making out two, and others three distinct species. It has also been confounded with the bald eagle of America, to which it bears a close resemblance when both are young—that is, before the American is dignified with a grey head, and the erne with a white train. These mistakes have been long ago cleared up, and the bird distinctly traced through all its maturing stages.

The habits of the sea-eagle differ materially from those of the golden. While the latter has its sole and grand resort in the Scottish mountains, the former has a very discursive range. It is a constant winter visitant to the Lowlands, and even as far as the south of England. I lately saw a young one shot on the banks of the Thames, and preserved by a bird-stuffer in Henley.

In the islands and wilder sea-coasts of Scotland, the erne may be met with the whole year, and is much less rare than the national bird. It is also more shy, which may perhaps be accounted for by its oftener coming in contact with man, its most hated foe.

A cursory glance will show how much more vulture-shaped both the bill and body of the sea-eagle are than those of the mountain one. She also partakes of the *nature* of the vulture, in having a less dainty palate than the golden eagle, and, being not near so quick a game destroyer, is more apt to devour what she does not strike down. Even carrion does not come amiss, especially in winter. Young sea-fowl and flappers are a favourite summer food; and when she builds inland, no more frequent prey is found in her eyrie than a young wild-duck before it is able to fly. We can thus trace her partiality for the moor-lochan or the sea-coast when choosing a habitation for her young: it is that she may feed them with the flappers and wild-fowl nestlings so plentifully scattered around, and so easily secured. When this supply fails, she is often fain to content herself with carcasses left upon the inland swamp, or cast up by the tide on the sea-shore. Most likely to prey upon *them* is the great motive for her winter wanderings when food grows scarce in the wilds.

THE OSPREY.

The osprey, or water-eagle, frequents many of the Highland lochs: a pair had their eyrie for many years on the top of an old castle on a small island in Loch Lomond. I am sorry to say I was the means of their leaving that ruin, which they had occupied for generations. When a very young sports-

The Osprey.

man, in company with a gamekeeper, I shot the female and trapped the male of the ospreys that were wont to build on the old Castle of Galbraith. They were a beautiful pair—the female, as in most birds of prey, being considerably the larger: the woodcut is a most correct likeness. The eggs of these ospreys had been regularly taken every year, and yet they never forsook their eyrie. It was a beautiful sight to see them sail into our bay on a calm summer night, and after flying round it several times, strike down upon a good-sized pike, and bear it away as if it had been a minnow.

I have been told, but cannot vouch for the truth of it, that they have another method of taking their prey in warm weather, when fish bask near the shore. They fix one claw in a weed or bush, and strike the other into the fish; but I never saw them attempt any other mode of "leistering" than that I have mentioned. When they see a fish, they immediately settle in the air—lower their flight, and settle again—then shoot down like a dart. They always seize prey with their claws, the outer toes of which turn round a considerable way, which gives them a larger and firmer grasp. Owls have also this power, to enable them with greater certainty to secure their almost equally agile victims; while the fern-owl has the toe turned round like a parrot, to assist it in the difficult task of catching insects in the air. But if this were the case with the others, although it might be an advantage in the first instance, it would very considerably weaken their hold when prey was struck.

I remember seeing another pair of ospreys on Loch Menteith that had their eyrie on the gnarled branch of an old tree. They became so accustomed to the man who let out boats there that the female never even left her nest when he landed on the island, unless a stranger was with him. Once, when he returned home after a short absence, he saw one of them sitting on the tree, making a kind of wailing cry: suspecting all was not right, he rowed to the island, and found that the female was missing, and the nest harried. They have never hatched there since: the male has been frequently seen, but he has never found another mate. When they had young, they did not confine their depredations to Loch Menteith, but used to go in quest of prey to the other lochs in the neighbourhood; and, in the evening, would fly down the glen, carrying a fish a foot long in their claws. The ospreys which yearly hatched on Loch-an-Eilan, on the Rothiemurchus estate, have also been wantonly destroyed within recent years.

The nest of the osprey is lined with coarse water-plants and grasses: the outside fenced with thick sticks, some of them four inches round, and three feet and a half long—proof enough of the strength of its legs and wings. The eggs are as large as a hen's, with reddish-brown spots. The osprey is about the size of the herring-gull; the breast nearly white, spotted with brown; back and wings dull brown; the thighs very muscular; legs and claws, which are of a bluish flesh-colour, equally so.

THE MOUNTAIN-FOX.

OCCASIONALLY, while ranging for roes, the hounds come on the track of a hill-fox; they will then show even more than their usual keenness, and open with greater ardour. As the same passes often serve for both, the roe-hunter has sometimes an opportunity of shooting this wily destroyer. Such a chance only occurs when prey is scarce on the mountains, and he leaves them to seek it in the woods below; I therefore do not recommend having a charge of smaller shot in one barrel—a plan adopted by some.

Any one who sees the hill-fox bounding along within fair distance, will immediately be struck with the difference of his appearance from that of the small cur which never leaves the low grounds. The mountain-fox is a splendid-looking fellow: even the sneaking gait of the enemy of the poultry-yard has, in a great measure, left him; he seems to feel that he breathes a freer air, and lives by more noble plunder. He is extremely destructive to all game within his range, and the havoc he makes among the hill-lambs is a serious loss to the farmer. He will also not unfrequently attack and destroy full-grown sheep. To prevent the increase of these freebooters, a man is appointed for each district of the Highlands, called the "fox-hunter," whose business it is to search out and destroy the young litters, in which he is ably seconded by the farmers and shepherds.

The place selected by the mountain-fox for rearing its young is widely different from that of its pigmy relation of the Lowlands. Unlike the latter, who chooses an old badger-earth or drain, in the midst, perhaps, of a pheasant-preserve, the hill-fox prefers some wild and craggy ravine on the top or side of a mountain, far removed from the haunts of men. In spring, these places are narrowly searched by the shepherds, and the den (for you cannot call the clefts of the rock an earth) often detected by the quantities of wool, feathers of grouse, &c., scattered about the entrance. These are the remains of prey brought to the young; for as soon as they are able to eat flesh, the old ones leave them during the day, bringing them food morning and evening.

When the litter is discovered, the fox-hunter is brought into requisition (who often at this time has more calls than he can answer); his terriers are sent into the den, and the young massacred; a watch is then set to command a view all round, in order, if possible, to shoot the old ones when they return. I have been told by people thus employed, that they had no idea of the proverbial cunning of the fox until they saw it shown upon such occasions. Although the place has been perfectly bare, the old ones have come unperceived within ten yards of the party, and were at last only discovered by the straining of the dogs on the leash. I have often heard the watchers say, that the ease with which the "tod" avoids their faces, and skulks behind their backs, is most surprising. If the foxes escape the guns, as they commonly do, the "streakers"[1] are slipped upon them, and, if not then run down, nothing remains to be done but again to set the watch. So long as the old ones are prevented from entering, they will return morning and evening for several days; but should either of them get access, and miss the young, they come back no more. At those times of the year when there are no litters, the usual way of hunting is to place a man, with a streaker or greyhound ready to slip, upon the top of the neighbouring hills; the fox-hunter then draws all the correis, crags, &c., where they prowl. Should Reynard be started, he is almost sure to take a course over the top of one of the hills where the men are posted. He comes up all blown, and, if observed (which, I must say, is seldom the case), has a fresh streaker slipped upon him, which ought to run him down.

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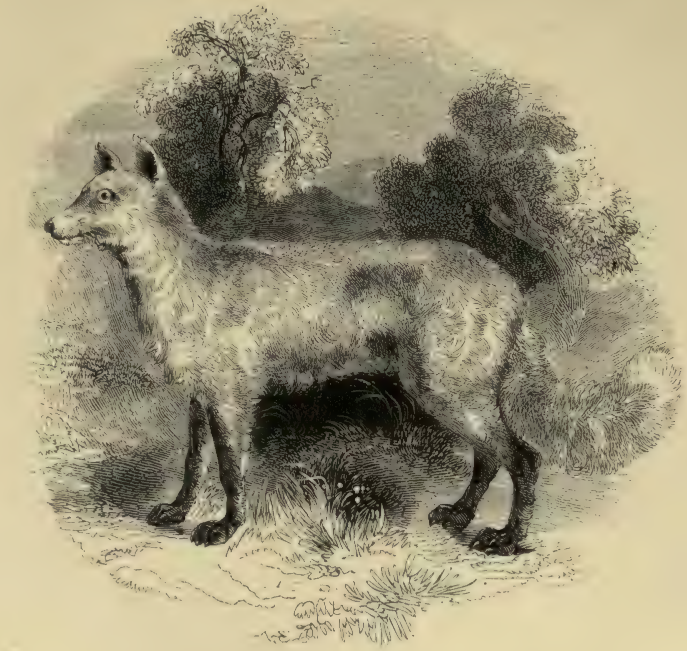
[1] A breed between the largest size of greyhound and foxhound. Some of them are swift, very savage, and admirably adapted for the purpose.

I may here give an account of a hunt I had with one of my brothers, after as fine a mountain-fox as ever prowled upon the wild moor. We had gone on a roe-hunting expedition to a high and steep hill in Dumbartonshire, the lower part of which was a larch and oak copse, the centre a large pine-wood, and the top covered with long heather. After choosing our passes between the pine-wood and copse, we sent a first-rate old hound to draw the latter; scarcely had it been in the cover ten minutes, when it opened upon a cold scent, and continued puzzling for a considerable time. As this was not his wont when upon a roe, we half suspected a fox: presently the scent warmed, and in a short time the hound opened gaily. Our hopes were high, as it came straight in the direction of our passes. In a moment I heard my brother fire: and the baying of the hound ceasing shortly after, I concluded the shot had taken effect, and walked off to see what he had killed. When I had gone a little distance, I met him running and calling to me to get into my pass again, as he had shot at an enormous fox in the thickest part of the cover; and as it had doubled back, which had occasioned the check, it would most likely try my pass next. I wheeled about at full speed, and arrived just too late for a deadly shot. When within seventy yards of the pass, the fox was bounding over the stone wall that divides the copse from the pine-wood, and presenting his broadside, a very distant but clear and open shot, I discharged both barrels, and watched narrowly to see if he was hit. The ground was level for a short way, and no abatement of his speed was perceptible; but as soon as he began to climb the hill, a labouring motion at once told that one of us had wounded him. Without stopping to load, I ran to see if there was blood upon the grass, and when thus engaged, the hound, which had recovered the track, came up full cry. I had no choice left but to breast the hill, and, if possible, keep within sound of the dog. Panting and breathless, I could hear the bay more and more distant, and was just beginning to fear that the fox's object was the savage ravines of Glen Douglas, when it ceased on a sudden. Encouraged by the hope that he might be run down, I redoubled my exertions, and after scrambling a mile and a half from where I fired, saw the hound at check, at the top of the pine-wood where it joins the heather. I made several unsuccessful casts above; and then, thinking that, unable to climb the hill, he had returned to the shelter of the wood, I was making a circle below, when he sprang out of the heather, not thirty yards off, and ran straight down the hill, his lagging and staggering gait showing that he had got his death-wound. I would now have given a good deal had my gun been loaded; but not a moment was to be lost, as the hound viewed the fox, and was again full cry. I dashed over stock and stone, but it was not long before there was another pause in mid career. When I came up, the ground was perfectly bare, not a furze-bush to cover a rat, and the hound completely at fault. I had just taken out my powder-flask to load, when, from no other concealment than the bare stem of a fallen fir-tree, the fox a second time burst out, as fair a shot as I could wish. The hound was close to his brush, so back went my powder-flask into my pocket, and I rushed down the steep with reckless desperation. The bay became fainter and fainter; my head grew dizzy: I had run a distance of three miles on one of the steepest hills in Scotland, and had just given up hope of an-



Mountain Fox.

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Cur Fox.

other check, when I heard a woodman's axe. More by signs than by words, I made him comprehend that he must follow the dog as long as he was able; sat down to rest for a moment, and then loaded my gun. No sound was now to be heard; the whole wood seemed as if it had never been disturbed. I shouldered my gun, and was proceeding, as I thought, in the direction of the chase, when I met my brother, who had from the first taken a different route, in order to intercept the fox at another point. We proceeded together in search of hound and woodman, but for a long time unsuccessfully. At last we thought of returning to the place where I first found him at work. Our delight may be imagined, when we saw the hound tied up, the woodman smoking his pipe, and the fox lifeless on the ground, a perfect monster. The man's account was, that after following a considerable way, and being nearly distanced, there was a sudden check: when he came up he found the fox dead, the hound standing over him, without having touched a hair—he had run till his heart was broken. We sent this magnificent fox to be stuffed at the College Museum, Glasgow. Those who had charge of it told us they had never seen one nearly so large, and many who came on purpose to see it were equally astonished at its size. It is now in my possession; and the engraving shows most correctly the difference between it and a very fine specimen of the poultry-fox, shot by myself in my brother's preserves. The brush of the larger fox is not longer than that of the smaller, and less white on the tip, but it is uncommonly thick and bushy. He stands very high upon his legs, which are exceedingly muscular; his head is very broad, and his nose not nearly so peaked as the other's; his coat is also much more shaggy, and mixed with white hairs—an invariable mark of the hill-fox, and which makes his colour lighter and a less decided red than that of the Lowland fox.

Fewer and fewer of the badger's tenements among the crags of Glen Falloch are now challenged or required by the hill-fox, his supplanting rival. Litter destruction, trap, and gun are telling on the red prowler, and, like the marten and wild-cat, he is gradually becoming rarer. Still, the old-fashioned fox-hunter is not yet banished from the primeval lands of Glen Falloch, but conducts his spring and autumn hunts in the stereotyped style of "sixty years since."

He is a dark bony man in the decline of life, descended from a race of fox-hunters, his father and grandfather having had charge of the same wild district as himself. Scrupulously polite and courteous to gentlemen—when addressing me he always confers the honour of knighthood—if irritated by the farmers or shepherds composing his hunt, he is a perfect master of Gaelic slang. Being a good running shot, he is as punctilious in claiming precedence for the first chance at a fox as the chief of the olden time at the stag; and woe betide the subordinate who dares to fire before him! Two farmers having bolted Reynard with their terriers from some rocks, and missed him just when the "tod-hunter" was rushing up, he saluted them with such a volley of abuse as completely stunned the whole party. One of the bunglers soon recovered presence of mind enough to unpocket a whisky-flask and deal a glass round; then, turning to the fox-hunter, "Had it no' been for your ill-tongue ye suld hae had yin tae;" which knowing dodge as effectually cooled the deathsman of the "tods" as if it had been a bucket of water.

How different soever their characters or dispositions may be, there is no doubt that men of the same occupation acquire a family likeness. Ratcatchers, "molemen," the old beadles of the Kirk, characteristically nicknamed "bell-tows," as well as cabmen, weavers, tailors, shepherds, &c., all are outwardly modelled into shape by the tools of the shop they work in. No better example of this general rule than the Highland tod-hunter. His free step, bronzed half-savage face, keen eye, and sinewy frame, tell tales of a wild life among mountains and precipices, equally callous to the winter blast or summer sun.

"Long, long ago," I was fishing with a companion of my boyish days in a quiet nook of the "Pass of Glencroe," when we met a man such as I have described, with a few ragged terriers at his foot. He was the Arrochar fox-hunter, and had been searching the high-lying shielings for a stray hound. My friend remarked that he had never seen a finer specimen of the genus. With his bold bearing, hardy weather-beaten face, erect wiry frame, short round foot in hobnailed brogue, lithe active gait, and long gun over his shoulder, this Arrochar hillsman was the very embodiment of Evan Dhu in 'Waverley.'

The fox-hunter's occupation on Luss and Arrochar has been gone for many a long year, and I never expected to see this last remnant of them more. Some time ago, when landing from the Loch Lomond steamboat at Balloch, on the Leven, a little, bent, very round-shouldered old man, with whey-coloured weaver visage, a suit of decent black clothes, splay feet cased in thin Wellingtons, asked if I did not know Gregor Macgregor. His voice was weak, his step tottering and feeble—how could I know him, poor fellow? He was as unlike the Gregor of the mountains as a turkey-buzzard to an eagle. He had completely succumbed, body and mind. There he was, stranded in the print-mill, like a vessel wrecked among the breakers—

"Oh, how unlike her course at sea,
Or his free step on hill or lea!"

I have noticed that foxes are less addicted to the higher cairns than badgers. The reason, no doubt, is that the vixen likes to be in the midst of prey when rearing her litter. My sons and I, however, have sometimes flushed the dog-fox on the baldest mountain-tops. The sedate badger never wanders very far from its home, and indeed is unable, from its short thick legs and ungainly form, to travel any distance for prey. About the end of autumn their food of wasps or beehives, slugs, beetles, &c., is very plentiful, and is eked out by the carcasses of braxy sheep. They then become extremely fat, and my boys trapped two in October covered with lard like pork. One of them being a very large male, with bright silvery hair, I had him preserved for our collection. After a third capture I put an end to the raid on the harmless "brocks."

THE WILD-CAT.

THE wild-cat is now rare in this country. Although I have spent a great part of my life in the most mountainous districts of Scotland, where killing vermin formed the gamekeeper's principal business, and often my own recreation, I have never seen more than five or six genuine wild-cats. Many, on reading this, will perhaps wonder at my statement, and even give it a flat contradiction, by alleging the numbers that have come under their own notice. Nay, I was even gravely told by a gentleman from the south of England, a keen observer and fond of natural history, that there were wild-cats there,[1] and the skin of a cat killed in one of the southern counties was sent to me as a proof. This, I need hardly say, was the large and sleek coat of an overgrown Tom, whose ancestors, no doubt, had purred upon the hearth-rug.

I am far from meaning that there are no cats running wild in England; of course, wherever there are tame cats, some of them, especially the very old ones, will forsake their homes, and live by plunder in the woods. These may also breed; but their progeny, though undomesticated, will always be widely different in habits, in appearance, in strength, and in ferocity, from the true cat of the mountains. I have seen no less than thirty of these *naturalised wild-cats* trapped in a year in a single preserve in the Highlands;[1] some of *them* might have been mistaken for the true breed. The colour in both was pretty much alike, but there were other points which clearly showed their domestic origin. They were, in fact, a cross between the wild and the tame cat. I have seen many of this kind stuffed in museums and collections, as fine specimens of the wild-cat, and believed to be so even by those who might have known better.

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[1] I have been frequently assured that wild-cats have been killed on the Cumberland and Westmoreland hills; but, never having seen any specimens, I cannot speak from my own knowledge. There is no doubt that martens formerly existed in some of the most hilly and wooded districts of England.

The unerring marks of the thorough-bred species are,—first, the great size; next, the colour, which does not vary as in the domestic animal, but is always a dusky grey, brindled on the belly and flanks with dingy brown—hair long and rough, the head exceedingly broad, ears short, tusks extremely large. Another very distinguishing point is the great length and power of the limbs. It stands as high as a good-sized dog. But perhaps the most unfailing mark of all is the tail, which is so long and bushy as to strike the most careless observer. In the males it is generally much shorter than in the females, but even more remarkable, being almost as thick as a fox's brush.

The engraving is taken from the largest female that has ever been killed in Dumbartonshire, and most correctly shows the difference of its size from that of a full-grown house-cat. It was trapped on the banks of Loch Lomond in the depth of winter, having come down to the low ground in quest of prey.

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[1] The mischief done to game even by the house-cat, especially if half starved in the cottages of the poor, may be shown from the admission of a witness whose evidence will not be doubted. A friend of mine had shot a large cat in a covert adjoining the cottage of an old woman, and, being rather pleased at ridding the preserve of such an enemy, was carrying it too ostentatiously past her door. She *banged* out in a fury, demanding "how he *daur'd* to kill the best cat in a' the country?" He replied that "wandering cats were never of much use for mice." "*Mice!* Wha's speaking o' mice, or rats aither? There was scarcely a day she didna bring in a young hare, or a rabbit, or a paitrick. *Use!* It wad be somethin' to be prood o' if thae ill-faured brutes o' dogs o' yours were half as usefu'!!"

Domestic Cat.

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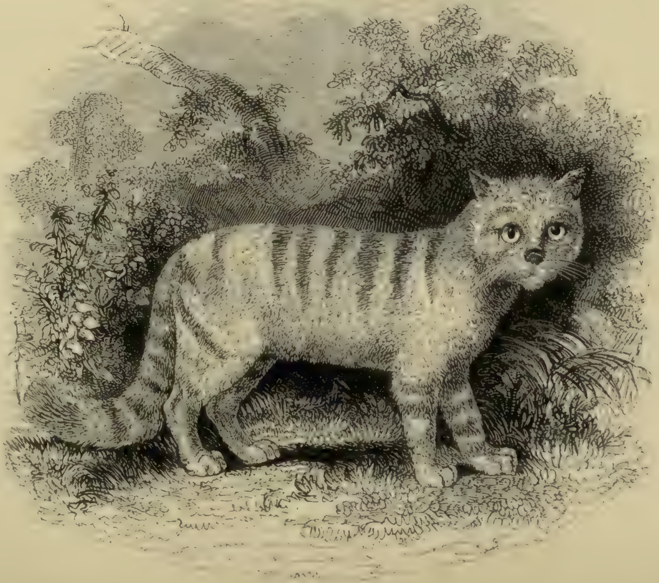

It will be observed that the Wild Cat is crouching a little, which takes off from its height, while full effect is given to that of the Tame.

The bait was half a hare, hung on a tree, the trap being set immediately under. The person who went to inspect it thought, when at a little distance, that a yearling lamb was caught. As he came near, the cat sprang up two or three feet from the ground, carrying the large heavy trap as if scarcely feeling its weight. He would have had great difficulty in killing it, had he not dodged round the tree when aiming a blow. I have seen two males bearing the same proportion to this specimen, both in size and fierceness of aspect, as an old half-wild Tom to a chimney-nook mother tabby. One of these was shot by a gamekeeper, when on a grouse-shooting expedition, in a very remote range; the other was trapped near the top of a high mountain.

Except in the depth of a very severe winter, the wild-cat seldom leaves its lone retreat. Nothing comes amiss to it in the shape of prey; lambs, grouse, hares, are all seized with equal avidity. The female fears nothing when in defence of her young, and will attack even man himself. She generally rears them in rocky clefts and precipices. I saw a couple of young ones that were killed in one of the mountain cairns; they were nearly as large as a house-cat, although not many weeks old. It was curious to see their short tails, and helpless, unformed, kitten look, contrasted with their size. Several attempts were made to shoot the old one, but she was never seen; probably, upon missing her young, she forsook the rocks.

The wild-cat has seldom more than three or four young ones at a time—often only two.

A sad and rather romantic incident connected with the wild-cat occurred in 1840, in the neighbourhood of my residence at that time. The farmer of Ben Ledi had detected some young wild-cats among the massy precipices near the top of that sublime mountain. One morning, after desiring his family to tell his brother (who was expected from Edinburgh on a visit) that he would be back in the afternoon, he left his home and wound his way up to the rocks of the wild-cats' den. Not appearing at nightfall, they became much alarmed, and arranged a party to search the mountain at break of day. As he had said something about destroying the wild-cats, they determined first to seek him there. Within a short distance of the precipice they at once saw him seated on a rock quite dead! His shepherd's staff, with his gully-knife tied on the end of it, was lying by his side, and a full pinch of snuff between his fingers. They traced a stream of blood to the wild-cats' rock, and upon looking at the knife it was dyed red also. The whole was soon apparent. The farmer, in endeavouring to stab the cats with his spear-knife, had stumbled upon it, and divided the femoral artery. His first natural impulse was to run home; but immediately getting faint, he had attempted to refresh himself with a pinch, when his hand fell powerless for ever. The man's face was familiar to me: I had often exchanged with him the friendly greeting when rowing up Loch Lubnaig for a few hours' fly-fishing; and I could hardly realise that he whom I had seen working at his peats a few days before, in full health and vigour, was now stiff and cold as the rocks of his mountain. The lesson was strange and startling, that he who had prepared the weapon of death, should so suddenly have perished by it himself. Full of life's hopes and cares, with an eye undimmed and his natural force unabated, he had gained the ridge of the Hill of God,[1] there all unwarned and unattended—to die.

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[1] Ben Ledi signifies in English "the hill of God"; and, I believe, takes its name from the old tradition of pilgrims crossing the mountain to sacrifice on the other side.

THE OTTER.

This eccentric creature is so much hidden from notice, partly owing to its resources for concealment lying both in land and water, that its habits are not much observed, although it is so generally distributed throughout the three kingdoms. It excites greater attention on the rocky coasts from being occasionally hunted there. In the West Highlands, especially, many of the resident proprietors pique themselves on the excellence of their otter-terriers. Some few keep hounds for the purpose; but the terrier is a very good substitute in these wild districts, and of course far more easily procured.

A good otter-hunt is a very curious sight, and from being able for the most part to see the dogs, and keep up with them, the interest seldom flags. In the Lowlands and Border counties of England, where otters are not so numerous, the foumart is often hunted instead with otter-hounds. I was told by a subscriber to a Cumberland otter-pack, that they had once run a polecat twelve miles from the place where they found his cold drag, and that a six or seven miles' chase is nothing uncommon. It must have taken the foumart nearly the whole night to have travelled this distance, and he is generally snug in his retreat many hours before the hounds are even laid on his track. A true otter-hound will, however, catch the scent immediately, if his game has been on the ground or in the river the previous night. The real breed, supposed to be a cross between the old English hound and a rough terrier, is very rare. They have shaggy coats of coarse wiry hair, but smooth heads and ears; in fact, a hound's head with a rough coat fit for the water. Most that we see now are either altogether rough or smooth. There is no dog more takes my fancy than one of these ancient thoroughbred otter-hounds. His weird look of hoar antiquity always associates him with "grisly eld"; and his characteristic method of working his amphibious quarry adds to the interest his appearance creates.

Terriers are best in rocky cavernous places, and seldom fail to make the otter bolt if they can get near him. From the abundance of prey, the sea-hunting otters grow to a great size; inland ones frequenting heavy dead water, where fish abound, are often large also. A remarkably fine specimen of a fresh-water otter was trapped some winters ago on the Thames above Henley, by a keeper, who sold him to me for a trifle.

Otters are always pretty plentiful on Loch Lomond, and some heathery rocks full of treacherous hollows, close to the water, on Inch Connachan, are called "the otter rocks," from the otters rearing their young among them every year. One of the island game-watchers, a few summers ago, saw an old female, followed by two young cubs, swim from these rocks to Inch Fad, a distance of two miles. The day was very calm, and the dam swam slowly to accommodate her young. In an old channel of the Finlas Burn, a pair were often to be seen in summer disporting in the pool, nearly tepid from the heat of the sun. They seemed to be enjoying a warm bath.

The otters seldom frequented Rossdhu bay till the autumn floods, when their sputtering blow was heard in the moonshine. A man known from his universal acquirements as Thomas A'thing, always knew when they were there, and the odds were that he sold their jackets before the week was out.

I recollect a very large one that carried his trap into the deep—for Thomas, like a knowing otter-trapper, never fastened it. A heavy rain all that night and next day raised the loch, and prevented him from "looking the trap." When the weather cleared he found it gone, and no float in the water to mark where it was. Phlegmatic Thomas immediately knew that the string was too short from the loch being so high; so he "consulted his raison," settled where the trap *should* be, kept his secret till the loch grew less, then returned and found the float within ten yards of the spot he had calculated, and the otter fast in the trap at the bottom—of course drowned.

One day in July, when going to fish, I perceived an otter perfectly still on the top of the water in Loch Vennachar. It was a good way from the shore, and just opposite some steep rocks, where the black deep water was much frequented by salmon. It seemed on the watch like a cat, and it occurred to me that possibly it might be looking out for the rise of a fish, after the manner of seals. The renter of a stake-net fishery told me, that once, when watching the gambols of a large salmon, a seal put up its head at the distance of a mile, swam up in an incredibly short time, and caught the salmon. The seal has this advantage over the otter, that it can seize fish with its paws, and also break nets with them.

Great numbers of otters resort to the lochs of Lubnaig and Vennachar, and come down in hard weather to the streams that flow out of them. I used to be much annoyed in the winter mornings, when ranging Lennie and Garwhinnie waters for ducks, by people getting down before me to secure the salmon which the otter had "ta'en oot." Of course they put up all the wild-fowl. After a powdering of snow, the mark of a hobnailed shoe was sure to turn my course from these rivers to Loch Vennachar, as I knew full well that the enormous foot would plod down Lennie water, and up Garwhinnie to the very loch, without leaving a nook undisturbed, if it only had a quarter of an hour's start of me. I had therefore to be at the river by break of day, and was rewarded by many a famous chance at the fowl, as well as frequent insight into the operations of the otter.

Many a fine fish have I seen lying on the shingle with only a few bites out of its neck; and if undiscovered by the otter's scavengers, it was seldom honoured by a second visit from its captor. In snow, I generally saw where the otter had landed to dry himself; but he never strayed far from the river's bank—and indeed it would have been difficult walking, as he always left the mark of his belly ploughing the snow, if there were only two inches on the ground.

In my early shooting days, when after wild-fowl, my water-dog brought me a half-grown otter which he had seized in a drain. I could not, at first, make out what extraordinary mouthful he had picked up. When I saw it was a young otter, I brought it home alive in my game-bag, intending to tame it. But the dog had broken its back, so we were obliged to have it killed. A few years after, I shot a fine male one near the same place. My terriers came on its track in a brook. It immediately took the land a long way ahead of the dogs, and by a short cut made for the loch. I got my eye upon it slowly cantering along, intercepted and rolled it over not thirty yards from the shore.

A friend of mine one autumn was wandering along the banks of the Tweed, and seeing the dead water of a deep pool a little agitated, he peeped cautiously over. An old otter and several young ones were paddling about in perfect security and comfort. He made a slight noise, and all disappeared as if by magic—where and how, he could not discover. After remaining quiet for a short time, they were upon the surface again in the same sleight-of-foot way. He described it as a beautiful and interesting sight, and slipped back without a second time disturbing them. He told me he had heard that Lord John Scott's otter-hounds came to the pool shortly after, on purpose to hunt them, but never discovered either the dam or her young.

The ears of the otter, buried in its fur, like those of most water-animals, give it something of a reptile appearance. But short ears are not always the characteristic of creatures that feed in and about water. There is an aquatic mouse, about the size and colour of a half-grown Norway rat, which has very large, round, transparent ears. I have often met with it when fishing the more sluggish waters of the Lowlands. It is fully as expert a diver as the common water-rat. When angling a shallow gravelly channel of the Ale in Selkirkshire, I saw one dive a distance of at least a dozen yards, and watched it swimming very swiftly under water all the time. From its light fawn colour, it is far more easily seen than the water-rat. Its legs are also longer, and its motions more light and springy. I have never observed it in any part of the Highlands.

The common *Mus aquaticus*[1] is an ugly creature, and his disgusting look is increased by the apparent deficiency of ears.

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[1] One of my critics has suggested that "the foul-feeding Norway rat" is the toad-devourer, and that the teeth of the water-rat are only fitted for vegetable diet. This may be the case; but from the formation of its teeth, I can see no reason why the water-rat should not feed on animal diet as well as vegetable. It was always in spring—when toads frequent water for breeding purposes, sometimes rolled up in large balls, oftener in pairs—that I noticed their scooped-out skins on the banks. The water is then too cold for the house-rat to dive in search of prey, and the season too early even for their leaving winter shelter for the shores of the river. The three white rats I was asked to inspect, and found that their food was sliced potato, turnip, and *pieces of raw meat.* Having been prisoners for some time, it was unlikely that they would have been still given raw meat had they neglected it from the beginning. "Tastes differ;" but I could never think the water-rat a pretty creature, and to me it has always been an object of even greater aversion than its Scandinavian cousin. Bewick is of opinion that the water-rat "feeds on frogs, small fish, and spawn." St John (in page 68 of his 'Wild Sports and Natural History of the Highlands') calls "the poor water-rat a harmless animal, feeding principally on herbage, not refusing, however, fish, *or even toads,* when they come in its way."

The same critic assumes that water-ousels are guiltless of the charge brought against them of devouring salmon-roe. As authority, he cites Mr Knox, who shot numbers of these birds without once finding roe in their crops. This exculpatory evidence savours somewhat of the Irishman's, who was condemned on

I remember three being taken alive, by a water-dog, on the Thames, of a rich cream colour. They all kept to the same bend of the river, and were constantly noticed gamboling among the reeds before they were captured. I never saw more

the evidence of one eyewitness, but who affirmed instantly that he could bring *twenty* witnesses to swear they did *not* see him commit the crime.

In his 'Birds of the West of Scotland,' page 71, Mr Gray writes: "This favourite both of poets and naturalists is cruelly shot by keepers and others ignorant of its innocent life, as an enemy to those who practise the gentle art in our Highland streams. Writing from the parish of Aberlour, the Rev. Alexander Wilson takes notice that the water-ousel was at that time abundant in the Spey and its tributaries; and also that during the time of spawning it was considered very destructive to the spawn of both trout and salmon. 'Formerly,' adds Mr Wilson, 'any person who succeeded in killing one of these birds was allowed the privilege of fishing in the close season; but for a long time back this has been lost sight of.'

"Mr Brown informs me that to this day a reward of sixpence a-head is given for dippers in some parts of Sutherlandshire. I believe it will be admitted by those who have studied the habits of this bird, that it feeds almost exclusively on fresh-water shells and the larvæ of aquatic insects, and that it is therefore a groundless charge to suppose that it destroys the spawn of fish. Instead of doing harm in this way, it is, in fact, the angler's best friend, by devouring immense quantities of the larvæ of dragon-flies and water-beetles—creatures which are known to live to a great extent upon the spawn—and even the newly-hatched fly of both trout and salmon."

In page 198 of 'Highland Sports,' &c., St John maintains that the "water-ousel walks and runs on the ground at the bottom of the water, scratching with its feet among the small stones, and picking away at all the small insects and animalcula which he can dislodge. It is in this way that the water-ousel is supposed to commit great harm in the spawning-beds of salmon and trout, uncovering the ova, and leaving what it does not eat open to the attacks of eels and other fish, or liable to be washed away by the current; and notwithstanding my regard for this little bird, I am afraid I must admit that he is guilty of no small destruction amongst the spawn." Mr St John affirms that on two or three occasions he had witnessed this act of the water-ousel, and "most distinctly seen the bird walking and feeding in this manner under the pellucid waters of a Highland burn."

"Doctors as well as *tastes* differ," and so do these two observant modern naturalists. My opinion is the same as Mr St John's, and I can give the one direct evidence which condemned poor Paddy in defiance of his twenty friends. No doubt my opponents will, like Pat, stick to the twenty and ignore the damaging unit.

When my son was quartered in the north of Scotland, a gardener, living close to his barracks, noticed that most of the water-ousels of a burn running past his garden assembled in a large pool within sight of his work. As an experiment, he baited three tiny fish-hooks with salmon-roe, and placed them in the pool, when an ousel was caught next morning. My son was much interested in this ousel-fishing, and will be glad to vouch for it to any inquirer. To show that this bird likes other food besides "the larvæ of aquatic insects and fresh-water shells," I savage little creatures; they seemed to surpass even an imprisoned weasel in ferocity.

I have often noticed that loathsome creatures prey upon loathsome food. A favourite morsel of the water-rat is a bloated toad,[1] while a nest of earwigs are the choice tit-bits of the latter. As many as forty have been taken out of a toad's maw. Sheridan's remark to a poor starved man eating shrimps is equally appropriate here—"You're very like your meat."

The otter, like all animals that depend on the waters for prey, loses much of his address and cunning when cut off from his native element. Bewildered on land, he seems to feel that he has no fair play, and sometimes refuses to take advantage even of the resources within his reach. In the river or loch, on the contrary, he has always his wits about him, and will

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may remark having twice noted a large dew-worm wriggling in its bill. That it is destructive to salmon few will attempt to deny the testimony of Sir James Ramsay Maitland—about the highest authority for fish culture in the kingdom. Every fish naturalist has heard of or seen the perfect array of breeding-ponds at Sauchie. In 1879 my son sent me the following communication from Sir James, drawn out for me:—

"CRAIGEND, STIRLING,
December 25, 1878.

"*Water-Ousels.*

"I am afraid these birds do more harm than is generally supposed to fisheries. I have this morning caught one in the act. He rose from a hole in the ice in one of the ponds containing trout-fry, with a fish about two and a half inches long in his bill. Several fish had lately been found on the ice, several yards from the hole, and the men had blamed the dipper, so I determined to watch him, and with the above result. J. R. G. MAITLAND.

"About twenty similar cases observed afterwards by me.

"J. R. G. M."

I have said, in this work, that the water-ousel's bill does not seem formed for seizing the small fry of fish, like the kingfisher's; but on finding my mistake the sentence has been left out in the present edition. Let me thank my very clever and kindly critic for giving me the opportunity of defending observations which were always well tested before being published.

[1] I have frequently offered my brown owls a toad, but they always refused it. They, however, greedily devoured frogs; and once, when the old male had just swallowed one, we cheated him with a toad. As soon as he detected the nauseous mouthful, he threw it from him with every symptom of disgust, although, in his hunger, he had half bolted it. Even the voracious pike rejects a toad as bait.

try every ruse ere he yields up his life. When hunted, and when want of air forces him to the surface, he either takes advantage of a water-leaf to cover the tip of his nose, all the rest of him being immersed, or comes up under some rotten stump precisely his own muddy colour. Flapper-shooters may notice the same instinct, when they surprise a brood of ducklings, though in a far less degree. At the signal of the mother they all dive, but come to the top again so stealthily—some under a screen of weeds, wrapped round them like a green veil, and others hidden by a hollow bank or root—that, although several are within a few yards, none may be detected until they are winded by the sagacious retriever.

WILD PIGEONS.

There are four kinds of dove found in a wild state in this country, the largest of which is the ring-dove or cushat, common all over the kingdom. This bird, called also the wood-pigeon, is thought by many to migrate; but if so, multitudes stay behind. Perhaps one reason for the supposition may be, that numbers congregate in the autumn and beginning of winter, under beech-trees, to feed upon the mast, and when this is all devoured they separate in search of other food. The first signal for the flocking of wood-pigeons is the yellowing of the grain; they then choose the ripest part of the field—if possible, near the centre, as being least accessible—and generally keep to the same place. When the acorns and beech-nuts fall, they greedily feed upon them; and I have sometimes taken about a dozen large acorns out of the crop of one bird. The flock are certain to return morning and evening to feed under any clump of old beeches in the neighbourhood of their haunts. First one alights, cautiously looking all round—then another, and so on, until they drop down half-a-dozen at a time. There are often two hundred in one flock.

By building a wigwam constructed of twigs, and not disturbing the doves afterwards for a week, they will become quite fearless, and feed close to it: my anxiety to shoot a pure white one which made its appearance among the rest suggested this plan to me. Many people saw this rarity and fancied it a tame pigeon. I, however, examined it with my telescope, and plainly saw that it was a white ring-dove. Its size and shape of tail clearly showed this; but the most certain mark was a *blue* ring instead of the white one. Notwithstanding my efforts, I could not succeed in killing this bird, and only got one random shot, about eighty yards off.

The sleeping-place of this flock was a small belt of tall trees, half a mile from their feeding-ground. I constantly saw the white dove perched near the top of one of the highest trees (another undeniable proof of its wood origin), and manœuvred to obtain a shot, but was completely baffled by the wary bird. Should, however, the night resting-place of ring-doves be known, a few may easily be killed by keeping one side of the plantation, and sending some one to make a little noise on the other. They will continue flying overhead, quite within distance, until the reports of your gun have driven them all from their retreat. Many a one have I bagged in this way, as I generally gave the pigeon woods a trial when returning home in the evening. A bad shot may have good sport by waiting for them at dusk under these roosting trees. The only caution necessary is, not to move your gun until the birds have assured themselves that the coast is clear and no enemy lurking near. As they drop in singly, each dove peers round in all directions before settling; whereas, at feed, the first few that alight act as spies to the bevy, the rest heedlessly following. If one should chance to fly up, the whole instantly take wing with a noise like distant thunder.

When frost and snow set in, the last resource of the ring-dove is the turnip-field. Even in deep snow the turnip-tops are not beyond reach, and are generally its staple food in winter. I rather think these doves never devour the turnip itself, although wild geese do, and even ducks when pinched with hunger. In a country where there are few turnip-fields, ring-doves are seldom seen in large flocks after the beech-mast is consumed. But in the Lowland counties, they continue to resort to them in multitudes until they pair in spring. I could never see any diminution in their numbers, or signs of migration. When they begin to feed on the turnip-tops, their flesh is bitter and ill-flavoured, but the beech-mast and acorns improve it much.

Early in February, should the weather be fine and sunny, the ring-dove begins to coo. At first there are only a few low notes in the morning and evening, but very soon this soothing sound is to be heard with greater power from every corner of the coppice. The doves may also be seen rising in the air to a considerable height, and then allowing themselves to fall with outstretched wings, repeating this motion several times, as if in exquisite enjoyment of the genial season. The coo of the ring-dove continues in a less degree during the summer, but chiefly in the morning and evening. They build very early—the nests being generally about half-way up the evergreen trees, and composed of a few twigs so loosely put together that you may see through them. Many have two broods in the year, but I should imagine not all—at least if we may judge from the decrease of those that coo and soar in summer and autumn. Numbers of branchers scarcely able to fly are to be met with in August and September. I have also found their nests with young in June—but most likely these were birds that have had their spring hatching destroyed. The nest of this bird is easily discovered; and most people who have lived in the neighbourhood of hanging woods are familiar with the bird's sudden crash through the branches, when startled from its eggs.

I once had some fancy pigeons of various kinds—croppers, tumblers, fan-tails, and carriers. It was a pleasure to feed them every morning after breakfast. One day a ring-dove most unexpectedly appeared, and claimed a share of the barley. At first he was rather shy, but in a week or so became the boldest of the company. For two months "the stranger," as he was still called, was never once absent at morning feed. He always flew over the wall into the garden where the dovecot was placed. Sometimes, after filling his crop, he lingered with the other pigeons nearly the whole day, but never stayed over night. I had the curiosity to watch him in the twilight, in order to find out his sleeping-quarters. After several "doubles," he at last roosted on an old apple pollard in a neighbouring garden, returning every night to the same branch of the same tree. At last he became tame enough to pick grain out of my hand. As he was evidently a bird of the year, I rather think he must have been taken from the nest, and kept in a cage, but, having made his escape, hunger may have forced him to beg a meal. Poor fellow! his departure was as sudden and mysterious as his advent. We missed him one morning, and he was never seen again.

The next in size to the ring-dove is the wild pigeon, or stock-dove. Considerable mistakes seem to have arisen about this bird, some fancying it altogether migratory, and others confounding it with the rock-dove, and tracing it as the origin of the domestic pigeon. The habits of the stock-dove are very different from those of the latter. They are always in summer met with in pairs, perching upon old trees, and building their nests in the decayed hollows. I found two myself in the grounds of Park Place in Berkshire, where a few stock-doves flock and roost with the ring-doves every winter. I had several times seen one of the pairs before the hatching-time. They were very wild, and flew more rapidly than ring-doves. About a month after I stumbled upon the nest in the fork of an aged tree. It was only about ten feet from the ground, and I might have shot the female at any time flying off; the other nest was near the top of an ivy-girt birch. These birds, as well as most of the pigeon tribe, lay two eggs, generally a male and a female. Hence the Scotch phrase, when there are only a son and daughter of a family, "a doo's nest."

The stock-dove is gregarious in winter, like the ring-dove, and feeds on beech-mast, &c., in the same way. They are not found farther north than the midland counties of England. They are beautifully shaped, and of a bluish-grey colour, the males having a fine golden neck. Unlike the other wild pigeons, their voice is a *failure*, being only a sort of grunt.

"Could it be known in what manner the stock-dove builds, the doubt 'whether they are the origin of our domestic pigeon' would be settled with me at once." So writes White of Selborne. It seems strange that this gifted naturalist could not discover a single stock-dove's nest. They build in hollow trees, decayed stumps, and stocks of pollards; hence their name. Every spring I have visited the south of England, and searched the primeval forests favourable to their breeding, I have found their nests. In such woods I have listened sometimes to the ring-dove, the stock-dove, and the turtle-dove, all calling at the same moment. White apparently had not heard of the "blue rocks" of our coast. I shot a pair of rock-doves right and left flying out of Nature's pigeon-house—a cave amongst the rocks of the Stonehaven coast—and the male is a fine contrast to a beautiful male stock-dove in my case of wild pigeons.

The rock-dove (the *true* wild pigeon) is about the size of the preceding, and has a white spot above the tail. I have often met with them among the rocky caverns of the coast. They fly with great rapidity, which may account for the name "blue rocks," applied by the admirers of the pigeon-trap to their fleetest birds. Both in the Caithness and Morayshire cliffs, I have noticed some brown and light-coloured; these, most likely, had joined their wild associates from some pigeon-house, although there were none within a distance of several miles. This is the more likely, as the habits of the rock-doves are exactly those of the domestic species. Their nests are never fixed in trees, and when tame pigeons leave the dovecot, they always build in similar places—viz., old ruins, and sheltered rocks and caverns. In fact, I have little doubt that they are the same bird in a wild and tame state.

One word for the turtle, that fairest of doves, and most welcome harbinger of spring. There is a plaintive murmur in its coo, connected as it is with the idea of constancy and truth, that has made it in all ages, *par excellence*, the bird of love and song. One peculiarity of this gentle creature is its concealing itself among the most impervious places of the wood, so that it is not easily seen. It generally builds near the top of thick evergreen trees, and, as it does not come to this country till the end of April, and returns in September, it only rears one brood, taking its journey as soon as the young ones are able to travel.

On first arriving here, they often frequent the green cornfields in pairs; at the time of incubation, however, they keep more to the woods, where nothing but the coo betrays their retreat. In some parts of England, I am told, they are gregarious after they have reared their young, and frequent the corn and pea fields like other doves. But I have never seen above four or five in company. I once traced out one by its coo, and had the satisfaction of seeing him perched on the topmost branch of an old oak, lowering his head at intervals, and pouring forth his tender notes. When partridge-shooting in Suffolk, a pair of turtles rose off the stubble, and settled upon one of the top branches of a high tree. I continued my range in their direction, and killed both at a shot. Neither had the patch on the side of the neck, which they loose soon after hatching-time.

Turtles are often met with in the northern counties of England, and are not unfrequently found in Scotland; but the latter are almost always young birds, which take a wider range than old ones do.

THE COMMON DOTTEREL.

THE BLACK-THROATED DIVER.

WHATEVER be the reason, this bird is yearly becoming a rarer visitant to North Britain. Frequenting only a few favoured places, and ten days or a fortnight being the limit of its stay, no wonder that this beautifully-tinted variety is about as difficult to meet with as any of the whole plover tribe. Even in the palmy days of Pennant, samples of the dotterel killed in Britain were not very attainable, as the following anecdote, told me by an English clergyman, will serve to show.

When spending the winter at Great Malvern many years ago, this gentleman, being one of the directors of the Museum, was showing me the collection. I took occasion to ask him if there were any dotterels in the neighbourhood, as I had been trying for years to shoot one, but had never yet seen a single specimen in its wild state. "When I was a young man," said he, "Pennant made me the same complaint, and suggested that, in place of being called *common*, the bird deserved the title of the *uncommon* dotterel." Soon afterwards this clergyman procured and forwarded a specimen to Pennant. And now comes the remarkable part of the story. For thirty years he never met the great naturalist, who had been totally blind for some time. After this long interval, happening to be in the old man's company, he walked up to him and said, "I suppose I need hardly hope you will remember me, Mr Pennant?" The blind man thought for a moment, and then called out with sudden eagerness, "Ah! my friend of the dotterel!"

The usual time of the dotterel's arrival in Scotland is from the 9th to the 14th of May, and they remain about ten days or a fortnight on their first ground before separating for the higher breeding-places. The nest is most difficult to find, and a dotterel's egg is therefore a great prize to the collector. They come to this country in "trips" of from five or six to a dozen, and pitch on undulating downs and hillocks near the sea. Rough grass and heather have less attraction for this bird than thin fallow fields. But the most favoured feeding-ground of all is a newly broken up and sown down field of old lea, where they seem to find the most abundant supply.

We were about to leave Edinburgh for our country home, when a note from Dunglass warned me that the dotterels had appeared. This was on the 12th of May. On the 14th I took the earliest train out, and was at Dunglass to breakfast. Directly after, the head-keeper and two assistants were in waiting; and by every means in his power my kind host had endeavoured to ensure success.

We threaded the glorious woody ravine surrounding the baronial halls of Dunglass, and I then started on a most fascinating coast drive, with my old acquaintances the Bass and the May in the distance, while the far view to the south was bounded by the romantic outline of Fast Castle, whose battlements could be dimly traced. At the side of the road was the ruin of a church, since used, or rather abused, as the grand emporium of a smuggling gang. Here many a Dirk Hatteraick of the Forth had found a safe and secret refuge for the contents of his lugger; and if the mouldering walls could speak, strange stories might they bring to light. Soon after we drove over Pease Bridge, the highest arch perhaps in Scotland. Looking down from it made one's head swim round.

The keeper had despatched one of his aides-de-camp to search the heights near the sea, but retained the other, as he, having noticed the arrival of the dotterels, could guide us to the fields where they had been seen feeding. We commenced our beat very systematically. Often in line, but sometimes separating, we quartered each field with the regularity of well-trained setters, and never left it while there was a corner untried. And in truth there was need for this carefulness, as our game, except when the variegated breast of an old male was turned towards us, was as like the colour of fallow or lea ground as a ptarmigan to the granite rock.

The birds had shifted, and the old sub began to look unhappy; not a trace of them where he had noted two small flocks on the 11th, and we had searched all the ground strictly. The day must certainly prove a failure unless the far scout was successful. We made for his heights, and saw him watching our approach. A wave of his arm prepared us for the good news that he had spied a flock of twelve, and hoped they were safe in the adjoining fallows. Again we were foiled by the restlessness of our quarry; for in place of alighting where the man supposed, the birds had flown southwards, as a dyke-mason informed us, and passed him within throw of his trowel.

The march we then continued to the extremity of our beat, but no appearance of the flock, when the keeper suggested, as a forlorn hope, that we should re-search the field where his assistant had seen the twelve so lately. An old man was putting up a gate in one of these fields. "Perhaps he may help us, like the mason," I suggested. "Oh, sir, he's frae the Hielants; he'll no ken them!" "Donal, hae ye seen thae birds that flee a' thegither?" "There micht be plenty wad pass me, but I couldna tell them frae ithers."

A laugh with, or at, old Donald cheered us for a look through the last two fields. Only three-quarters of an hour now remained if I wished to catch the afternoon return-train, and we had gone over one field, and half the other, when the young watcher halted and listened. I was instantly on my guard, and heard for the first time in my life the "twit, twit, twit," of the dotterel, and soon the company of twelve careered overhead at a great height. Contracting and lowering their circles, they darted out of sight behind a knoll, and we now felt sure they were snugly grounded in the same field with ourselves.

The younger assistant was on my left when we began the search, which we had scarcely done when, only a gunshot beyond him, he discovered the flock. A halt and sign brought me to his side. Next me stood a brilliant male, and the rest, a good deal scattered, were beyond him. Getting the old cock in line with as many as possible, I fired a raking charge out of my heavy duck-gun. He lay dead, as well as a couple of hens on the further side of him. The rest wheeled round and round high in the air, and again lighted in the same field. The keeper noted the spot, and brought me up to it. Again an old male was my aim; but getting the group better together, another cock and three hens fell to this discharge.

The dog-cart was close at hand, so, selecting the two brightly-plumaged cocks and two hens for my brother's collection and my own, I left Dunglass and returned to Edinburgh by the middle of the afternoon, much gratified with so agreeable a day, and the possession of so long coveted a prize.

Another tantalising bird had eluded us for many years—viz., "the black-throated diver." We already possessed specimens of the other two British divers—the Great Northern or Loon, and the Red-throat or speckled diver—both in spring and winter plumage; but black-throats, although pretty common on the northern lochs, are far more rare in the waters of the central or western Highlands. During one of our fishing tours through the wilds of Sutherland, we learned that a pair of these birds hatched yearly on a lochan a few miles from our inn, and if we shot the male, the female, who had only begun to lay, would soon provide another mate. Next morning we drove to this moor-loch, with its prettily-wooded islets, on two of which my son and I lay hid, while our attendant moved the quarry.

Snugly ensconced among the bushes of the two mid islets, we soon perceived the pair emerge from the reeds of the furthest bay, and the boatman guiding them if possible to our cross-fire. The creatures, of course, kept close together when taken in rear, and, coasting the mainland, seemed inclined to shirk a passage between the islets. This move forced me to change ground to the opposite side of my island. I soon, however, saw them cross over and make for the very passage we had set them. Instantly regaining my first ambush, I had a full view of the splendid birds. In their gorgeous spring plumage their feathers absolutely gleamed in the sunlight. Rounding the point of my islet, they turned into the straits between the guns. My son had seen me creep away to the other side of my ambuscade, but was too much occupied with the divers to notice my return. He therefore thought that all depended on his gun, however distant the chance.

The birds were almost within reach when both dived, but soon came to the surface again, a near shot from me, and consequently a far one from him. A perceptible difference in size enabled both of us to mark the male, and my duck-gun had covered him, while my finger was just touching the trigger, when an opposite shot prostrated him on the surface. My feeling at the moment was like a person going down-stairs in the dark, and reaching the last step before he expected. The object is gained sooner than intended, or even wished.

Unmixed pleasure at the brilliant prize floating on the waters quickly followed; and when our boatman rowed to land with the finest male specimen I had ever seen of this most beautiful of all divers, my content was complete.

ROCK AND RIVER OUSELS.

Although the rock-ousel, as his name imports, is fond of rocks and precipices, and commonly builds among them, yet a pair may often be met with haunting ferny brakes with only a few scattered stones, upon which they delight to perch. When disturbed, they fly from stone to stone, uttering a very grating chirp, which seems to be a note of defiance. One summer (1842) a good number of them came down from the hills to the garden at Lennie, and did much damage to the fruit, especially the currants. The gardener shot several, which he brought to me. The ring of the males was very dusky, and in some there were brown feathers interspersed. The females had no white ring at all. They were timid birds—much more so than the thrushes and blackbirds, their fellow-depredators—and it required some caution to get a shot at them.

A nest was found in the spring, near the foot of a thick bush, on the bank of a rocky brook. They reared their young ones undisturbed. I think it not unlikely that the greater number of those that frequented the garden in summer were birds of that year, although the crescent of one shot by the gardener, evidently an old male, was far less pure than in spring, and certainly not so fully pronounced. A pair had their nest on the crags of Arthur's Seat, a few summers ago, and I often watched them with interest. The crescent in both, particularly the male, was silvery as the moon's, and the birds were not wild. Their song is pleasing, though melancholy. This bird has always been a great favourite with me, most likely from association, for it loves "the unplanted places."

The little dipper, or river-ousel, is no less attractive. There is a look of loneliness about this little inhabitant of the flood like the solitudes it frequents. Often, in the deepest and most tangled recess of the mountain-burn, or perched upon some gaunt stone by the side of the moorland loch, the water-ousel, when disturbed by some chance explorer of nature, will fly cheerily forward, and, resettling upon the clear water, seems, by the buoyancy of its little movements, to try to impart its happiness to the thoughtful visitant.

The food of this bird consists of water-insects, the roe of fish, &c. It is incapable of feeding at any great depth, from the want of web feet, on which account it generally chooses the shallows where the salmon and trout roe is deposited. I have twice seen it feed upon some very minute substance about a foot from the surface, but whether animalculæ or not, it was impossible to ascertain. The first time I went after wild ducks on the river Tay, I saw a motion in a clear still creek, and when I cautiously peeped over the bank, I discovered the little bird under water, rowing itself both with wings and legs, at the same time pecking at something, apparently with as much ease as a barn-door fowl would devour a handful of grain. It was so intent on its food that I was not perceived for a few seconds; but on looking up to see if the coast was clear, it saw me at once through the water, rose to the surface and flew away, as with one and the same motion. Another winter, my notice was attracted by just such a ripple in Lennie Water, and again I detected the ousel at his secret meal. The water in both cases was very bright, but, without a microscope, it could not be discovered whether the delicacies on which it regaled were vegetable substances or some minute water-insects.

In spring and summer these birds generally are found singly or in pairs, but in winter they often congregate in some favoured river, and may then be seen in great numbers. They do not always select the places where fish are most abundant, as we should imagine from their living so much on the roe, and the water-insects that prey on it. I stumbled upon a newly-flown nest of these birds, when fishing the brook that separates Loch Katrine from Achray, and could easily have caught some of them; but I rather amused myself by watching their unformed bows and curtseys—copied, no doubt, from the parents, who were flitting up and down in great alarm.

The water-ousel is a hardy bird, especially for one that does not migrate in summer; and it is a novelty, when land and water are bound by an iron frost, and,

> "seized from shore to shore,
> The whole imprisoned river growls below,"

to hear this little bird, perched upon the frozen mass, strike up its cheerful song. Not another note is then to be heard, which gives it the more imposing effect,—like the nightingale at midnight, making dreariness more dreary by contrast. The pipe of this river-minstrel is not unlike the first attempts of the thrush in early spring, when a cold wind a little chills its power.

A friend of mine had the good hap to shoot a white ousel on the banks of the Clyde. I narrowly inspected it, and could not detect a single dark feather. Legs, beak, and all had exactly the same cream-coloured shade.

I have several times been fairly cheated by the water-ousel, and had a fruitless stalk for ducks through its means. Seated at a distance, upon a small stone, it is often difficult, even with one's glass, not to mistake it for the head, and the stone for the body of a duck. If the ousel does not fly, his motions appear exactly like the duck moving its head. His restless disposition, however, seldom allows him to remain long enough on the stone to keep up the deception, and, generally before commencing operations, you see the duck's head fly off. I have noticed this bird with a large worm in its beak, which it had picked out of the banks of a mossy brook, high among the hills, its summer residence. During the severity of winter it always prefers larger streams, its favourite food being the spawn of fish and water-insects.

A SPRING WEEK IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS.

The lark, with his song of glee, and the lapwings, as they wheeled about, tumbling and chasing each other, with their vernal scream of ecstasy, had given some cheerfulness to the dull sown fields of the Lothians, when a short tour was recommended for the health of my youngest child. I had seen enough of the lovely glen which separates the Holy Loch from Loch Eck, in my shooting and fishing excursions, to make me long to penetrate farther; so, with the hearty concurrence of my fellow-travellers, it was to this inlet of the West Highlands that we directed our course.

An easy steam passage brought us to Kilmun, and next morning we skirted the Echaig,[1] which, like a band of silver, unites the two lochs. Every object here was familiar. M'Erle's pool, famous for a stray grilse; Ouig Hill, appropriately pronounced *wig* by the natives, from its rough long heather; and

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[1] I had this salmon-stream, and the shooting of Kilmun hills, taken from Mr Campbell of Monzie. In addition to salmon and grilse, the river abounds with sea-trout: I have killed forty in about six hours. Thews and sinews are required to travel the moor. It is a sort of peninsula, jutting out between Loch Long and the Holy Loch, on which account scarcely a bird escapes the boundary. The grouse are pretty regularly distributed, and, with really good dogs, no man need return dissatisfied. At the beginning of the season, when the tops of the hills are the best range, the eye rests upon views singularly bold and varied. For the first few weeks I generally averaged from twelve to eighteen brace a-day, besides hares and snipe. The woodcock-shooting is the best in Cowal.

Rashfield shielings, with their thatched roofs and smoky "kipples," where the peat-fuel gives a pleasant notice to the traveller that for once he is getting out of the reach of carbonic influence. With most of the inmates of these poor dwellings we were also well acquainted; and among them we could place on record examples both of worth and happiness.

At a little distance, but only far enough to keep up his credit as a lone man, was the cell of the Hermit of the Glen. A less interesting specimen of this genus of mortals could scarcely be imagined. He seemed to have courted solitude only for its notoriety; and, instead of the anchorite's "crystal well," drank freely and constantly of "*mountain-dew*."

This jovial recluse laid claim to the attention of all strangers; and, after repeated invitations, I once had the curiosity with some friends to visit the "wee place," as he calls his hut. His methods of making us understand that guests were expected to leave some donation behind them, as a trifling memento of the pleasure their company had given, were certainly ingenious enough; and after gaining his point, he in his turn volunteered to treat us with "The Braes of Balquhidder." And really it was worth a trifle, for he managed what I had supposed to be an impossibility—viz., to deprive the beautiful air and words of every vestige of harmony. But his grand recipe for drawing the purse-strings is practised upon his female visitors, and consists in enumerating the moneyed dames who were dying to share his eight feet by six cabin—but they "never gaed near his heart," placing his hand most pathetically on the spot where that organ should have been! This stale trick, I was credibly informed, had maintained in full radiance his salamander of a nose for some thirty years.

Like many anticipated pleasures, the unknown half of our day's journey did not come up to expectation. The rugged grandeur at the lower end of the glen soon blended into low hills and copses; but the drive along Loch Fyne is certainly very beautiful. We slept at Inverary; and next day, after admiring the waterfall in Glenara, and walking up all the steep braes for the sake of the views, arrived at Dalmally.

Having despatched a messenger to the Black Mount to ascertain whether the sea-eagle had built in any of the forest lochs, we stepped out as far as the little rustic bridge to enjoy the soft pure air. A well-known twitter greeted us, and there was the first swallow darting under the old arch of the primitive bridge, his steel-blue back glancing in the setting sun. "Two of them!" shouted my eldest urchin, who, for great diligence in Greek and Latin, had been allowed to accompany us,—"they *do* make a summer."

A car, containing two anglers and their attendants, now drove up. They had been fishing since morning at the Falls of the Orchy, and had taken a couple of salmon—one nine, the other fifteen and a half pounds weight. The captor of the large fish was in great glee; for the landlord told me it was the "biggest" that had been caught since the season began. The weather had been so dry, and our time so limited, that my salmon-rod and tackle had been voted supernumerary. I should now have had no objection to their company, especially as next day, being a festival of the English Church, and all the fishers being Englishmen, I should have had all the river to myself.

The swallows were true prophets; next day was mild and calm, with a few clouds. After breakfast I walked to the cottage of one of the old fishing-guides to borrow a rod, reel, and flies. "The river is so small, and the wind in so bad an *airt*, that unless it changes you would not get a rise," said old James M'Nicol. Seeing me rather incredulous, he added, "I will come down at one o'clock, and should the wind change, we *may* get a fish. The wind had been in the same "airt" for the last week, and well did sly James know it would not change. The truth was, both he and the other old guide had been hired by the Sassenachs, and dared not go out, or even lend a rod or fly, as they of course wished to give the river a day's rest. I was not, therefore, surprised when M'Nicol made his appearance at one, with the excuse that he had to tie some small flies for Mr ——. Opposition only put me upon my mettle. I borrowed an old rod from the waiter, while the landlord, by some secret influence, procured three of the most approved salmon-flies, and engaged to send a post-boy who knew the casts.

Being thus pretty well equipped, I started about three for the Falls of the Orchy. My boy—no contemptible bait-fisher for trout—begged hard to accompany me, as he had never seen a salmon killed.

At the tail of the lowest pool I had the good hap to hook a fish. As I was far from placing implicit reliance on the waiter's tackle, it took some time to tame him; and when I fairly had him under my thumb, where was the gaff? The beach, however, was good, and the post-boy handy, so we soon extracted a very fine eleven-pound salmon. The next pool was a long, black, whirling linn, but we fished it blank; not a break or boil from top to bottom. We now came to a dangerous but very good cast. It was also deep and black, full of sunk rocks; and, should I hook a fish, it would soon show what the tackle was made of. At the very spot where I expected, up he came; and now was the tug of war—the fish fighting for the rocks, and I doing my best to keep him clear of them, knowing that if he effected his purpose there was every chance of being cut. My tackle proved excellent; I fairly foiled him, and at last wore him away from the perilous rocks. The post-boy's hands again acted gaff, and brought to the bank a noble fifteen-pounder.

I was now quite satisfied, and despatched the ready-handed son of the whip for our car, which was put up opposite the place where I killed the first fish. At the very foot of this pool part of the stream flows near the opposite bank. More for the sake of instructing my boy in the mystery of throwing a long line than with any sanguine hopes of a rise, I swept my fly twice over this bit of water. At the second throw up came a famous fellow. He turned his head down stream, and dashed along, making my reel ring. There was now a race different ways—my son for the post-boy, and I with the fish. Jehu came up puffing like a grampus, ready to grip his prey. He soon saw that his services would not be required for some time, as the salmon was fresh and strong, and making beautiful play. Patience and caution at length brought the fish to the bank; and for the first time the post-boy, after having a firm hold, lost it from the strength of the salmon. It was a little while ere I could bring him within reach again, for the fright gave him fresh vigour; but the clutch at the root of the tail was more sure next time, and we landed the finest fish as yet taken in the Orchy since the season opened—sixteen pounds. I had both hooked and killed every fish I rose, and with the same fly.

Here let me caution gentlemen to be neither too sanguine nor dispirited by the fishing-guide's prognostications of success or failure from the weather. When you have good sport, they are sure to say the day is all that can be wished. If, on the contrary, you don't stir a fin, they will as certainly console you with some flaw in the wind, water, or sky, how propitious soever they all may have been. Catch them telling the angler (what is more often than not the true cause) that it is his own want of skill. The greatest bungler may more easily catch a salmon than one of these chaps make such a mistake.

Wild and uncouth were the exclamations and comments from a circle of Highlanders, when the salmon were paraded before the inn; and truly absurd was the edification depicted in my little fellow's features, as he stared from one rugged weather-beaten face to another, severally delivering themselves of their Gaelic sentiments.

The cuckoo is a bird of bad omen if heard for the first time before you break your fast. So said some mountain sage to my little boy, who was unfortunately in that predicament. You are sure to fail in whatever you undertake immediately after; in other words, have "a gowk's errand." Nevertheless the unlucky gowk had brought us a fragrant morning, or more likely the fine morning had tempted the *mal-apropos* call from the joyous bird. A note from Peter Robertson was handed to me. The sea-eagle had built upon the island of Loch Bah, but was shy and not sitting close yet. "It is all that nasty cuckoo," said my son. Had you heard *it* in place of seeing the swallows, you would never have hooked the salmon."

There is often more earnest in these "saws" than grown people would be willing to admit. I have known a deer-stalker[1] refuse to go out, on a fine morning for the sport, if he saw a mouse on his kitchen floor at early dawn and *was unable to kill it.* The same man was confident of success should a cat jump out of a bush before him *when on his way to the hill.* He affirms that he never saw either omen fail. This man, from the braes of Atholl, for some years conducted a flourishing trade in Edinburgh, was a capital clear-headed man of business, and continued till his death quite as superstitious as when he left the glens. When the victims are ready prepared, the victimisers will never be wanting. There was a woman in Morayshire who used to sell, for a guinea, a bottle of spring-water as a charm against all diseases (if her remedy got a *fair* trial, it might have done more good than she thought or intended); and after my account of the deer-slaying cobbler, no one will be surprised to hear that she had no lack of customers. Respectable people, often from a great distance, paid (to her) very profitable visits. She was proud of being the lineal descendant of a race of witches, and her grandfather was acknowledged the most potent wizard of the district. From him she inherited the much-boasted possession of " the river-horse's bridle " and " the mermaid's stone," which powerful spells she exhibited as proofs of her weird origin and descent.

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[1] Like most Highland poachers, he had two strings to his bow, and followed the lawful calling of a shoemaker, to conceal as much as possible his depredations on the hills. He told me he had killed thirteen deer before breakfast-time. When after grouse, he never wasted powder and shot upon ptarmigan, as they only fetched two shillings a brace then, whereas grouse brought three and sixpence. The ptarmigan were so plentiful in the forest, that he assured me a fair shot might have bagged ten brace in a few hours.

In defiance of the boding cuckoo, I ordered out our vehicle for Inveroran. No votary of nature can follow the windings of this lovely strath of the Orchy without deep interest. The road runs parallel to the river nearly the whole way, and by a little observation, one can scarcely fail to catch a passing glance at many of the creatures that frequent these lonely wilds. An alpine hare, now of a mottled blue and grey, scuttled along the road before us for a considerable distance. She fortunately did not cross it—that *would* have been a clincher to the cuckoo! A roebuck was browsing upon the shoots of the birch and hazel bushes that fringe the river, not fifty yards off. He only stared at the carriage and " dandered " up the opposite hill. And now the dark outline of Bendora rose before us, whose slate-coloured crags add greatly both to the gloom and grandeur of the forest.

Arrived at Inveroran, there was the characteristic sight of a fine herd of the mountain-deer, greedily feeding a little below the crest of the near hill, upon the young sweet grass which had sprung up upon a long stretch of burnt heather. The telescope was soon brought to bear upon them, and some fine harts were singled out. By the time we had dined, they had fed down to the adjacent knolls.

At break of day the landlord's son and tax-cart were at the door of the inn to convey us part of the way to Loch Bah. Peter Robertson was all ready to jump in, when we passed the handsome new forest-lodge where he had taken up his abode. We halted our cart at the nearest point to the loch, and cut across on foot through the heathery morass. A few redshanks, like well-set-up sentries, were stalking upon the mossy banks at the water's edge, and a stray one occasionally took a short flight from one little tarn to another, piping its desert cry; while numbers of curlews serenaded us from the clouds with their pleasing mournful scream.

When we had picked our steps through this boggy ground, Loch Bah burst upon our view, and the eyrie itself was just discernible upon the birch-tree in the islet. Peter's glass was fixed, and the bird soon distinguished upon the nest. About half a mile from the islet, and close to us, was the shallop, which we were in the act of launching, when a sound, something between a "squeal" and a whistle, rose and died away upon the still solitude. I had never heard anything like it before so singularly plaintive. It had something of the modulated whistle of the buzzard or the kite, but was far more sweet, soft, and musical, so fitted to the scenery and the place. It seemed to rise in a low cadence from the shore, and then melt into the clear air. "That's the otter," quoth Peter; "I've heerd them say he gie's a whustle sometimes." It was soon apparent that he had guessed right, for the "whustle" came next time from the loch, and a gentle break, followed by its circles, showed where the otter had popped up its head, after swimming under water from the shore.

A difficult channel we had to steer through on our way to the islet; and although we changed our land pilot into a water one, and placed him in the bow to boot, our skiff was frequently bumped, and once nearly lifted clear of the water by the numerous sunk rocks.

All sitting birds face the wind, to prevent its ruffling their feathers; so, knowing where the eagle's head would be, we attempted to come in behind her. But when we got halfway, she flew off her eyrie and sat upon a tree, her white tail shining like the silver moon. We were all watching her when the other also flew off the nest and settled near his mate. This did not look well for a shot—the hen evidently was not sitting. When we neared the islet, they both flew out to meet us, uttering their shrill scream. Sometimes they floated at an immense height, and then, cleaving the air in their descent, flew round their eyrie, beating with their wings, which made a hoarse growling noise, like (forgive the comparison) the paddles of a steamboat at a distance on a calm day.

Peter's great anxiety was to get me hidden as quickly as possible; and a speedy job we made of it. I had hardly time to notice the terror of some deer springing into the water to paddle across to the mainland, like Robinson Crusoe's savages, before I was ensconced under a heather and bracken screen. A small aperture was made for my gun-barrel, and from seven o'clock till one I was left alone on the island.

Meantime my companions rowed away to the far end of the loch, and having found a wild-duck's nest full of fresh eggs, and kindled a fire, they soon, with the addition of our basket of provisions, turned out a most comfortable breakfast. The excitement of the moment quite kept down *my* hunger. Every time I heard an uproar among the small black-headed gulls, I was sure the royal pair were approaching; and soon their shadow passed over my ambush. They were generally swimming slowly, at a great height, and seldom came near the nest tree. Once or twice I heard the hollow rumbling, and they dashed past at the distance of sixty yards; but had I wished to take this random chance, it was impossible, as I only commanded the eyrie tree.

The intervals of their visits became longer every time. Once a pert kestrel lighted upon a twig only a few yards from the mouth of my gun. Shortly after, its mate perched upon the same branch, and both began to preen their wings without the slightest suspicion that their dreaded foe was closely watching all their motions.

At last the female eagle returned alone. She soon took her departure, and we saw neither of them any more. Whether the sun glancing upon my gun-barrel had scared them, or the skiff upon the loch, we were unable to decide. There was not above half a foot of the barrel visible; but the eagle is of all birds the most wary, and nothing can elude its eye.

When Peter felt sure the game was up, he returned to release me from my watch. I consoled myself with a hearty breakfast and his assurances that we should manage better next year, if we were spared, by allowing the bird to sit hard before disturbing her. Had this been the case now, I should certainly have had a fair shot.

I examined carefully the erne's nest. It was very deep as well as round. There could not have been less than a cart-load of large sticks and twigs. I had some curiosity to know whether both birds built in company, or if the male acted "cad" by bringing the materials, while the female was the architect. Swans are very gallant in this particular, supplying their mates with aquatic plants and reeds, while these sit comfortably on the nest and weave its sides. The male eagle, however, would have a far harder task. I once, with much interest, noticed a pair of baldcoots, on Duddingston Loch, constructing their damp abode. The male supplied his mate with the leaves of the water-lily, and the female came to the side of the nest to receive his billful, laying it along in a neat methodical way like a building mason.

A delicious afternoon enabled us to equally enjoy our return drive down the banks of the Orchy. The gorcocks, in the full pride of their scarlet combs, strutted often within pistol-shot of the carriage; and at the foot of the strath, the larches which grew upon the river's bank had their customary complement of black-game, perched as usual near the top, and busily engaged in nipping the young shoots. Within a short distance of the inn at Dalmally, a brace of partridges were picking up the corn just sown by the landlord. The noise of our vehicle made them take wing. Immediately, an impudent sparrow-hawk struck one down. I did not see the deed done, but our driver turned round, and with great animation pointed out the bush where the wounded partridge lay. The little assassin was beating a retreat, but left ample proof of his guilt in a shower of stolen feathers which streamed from him as he flew. He would be certain to return to his prey, and might easily have been trapped. No greater proof of the dire havoc hawks commit among game can be adduced, than the fact that they refuse everything they *don't* hunt down themselves; while, on the contrary, no birds are easier trapped, even at a stale bait, than kites and buzzards.

Once, and only once, I noticed a hen-harrier devouring what she had no hand, or rather foot, in killing. On Lennie Moor I wounded a grouse, and marked the spot where it towered and fell. The scent was bad, and my dogs could not find it. Two days after I was ranging the same ground, and a female hen-harrier rose out of the heather. She was giving the last polishing to the bones of my grouse. It is probable she might have noticed the bird fall, as hawks are very quick in detecting disabled prey. I have seen them single out the wounded bird from a pack, and stick to it closely. Upon one occasion a hawk made a desperate charge at a grouse I had actually knocked down, neglecting several others which rose at the same moment. I gave him an uncomfortable salute with my second barrel.

Next day was the last of our Highland trip, and my boy begged hard to be allowed to dedicate a couple of hours to the pike at Kilchurn.[1] He had caught his bait before breakfast, and borrowed a pike-tackle, the waiter's old rod, and a small rickety reel with *ten yards of very rotten line.* We walked down to the castle of Kilchurn, which is surrounded by a shallow reach of water, a sort of enclosed bay from Loch Awe, full of large pike. A boat is a great advantage here, where sunk banks and feeding-grounds abound in every direction, as in many of the shallower Highland lochs. We soon hooked a large pike, which ran out our morsel of a line, and then snapped it. He most likely found as little trouble in disgorging the hooks as in breaking the line, which the following fact may show, of which I can vouch for the truth.

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[1] The three best places on the loch for pike are—Kilchurn, at the head; Port and Sherry Bay, half-way down, where the pike generally run large; and, best of all, the "Foord" at the foot.

A Thames fisherman hooked a large "jack" when spinning at a mill-tail for trout. Not having a disgorger at hand, he cut the line and threw the pike into a tub of water, to keep it alive and fresh for sale the following day. To his amazement next morning, the creature had managed to cast up the eight-hook tackle, which was lying in the tub.

The two following instances of the pike's voracity are almost incredible, but both I can also certify. In the spring of 1841, two pike of twelve pounds weight were cast upon Loch Vennachar shore, each with a hold of the other's jaws, and quite dead. The second instance happened in Suffolk. A jack of only two pounds was found choked in attempting to swallow another of a pound and a half. The gentleman who saw them taken out, only a short time before, told me the fact.

But even these instances are equalled by the solemn toothless cod. A friend of mine was trolling in Loch Long, and hooked a seithe. An enormous cod seized the seithe, and paid the penalty by being brought into the boat himself. His girth seemed unnaturally large, and upon opening him, a brown-paper packet of sandwiches, enough for luncheon to a pretty large party, was taken out. They could not have been less injured, mustard and all, had the cod's stomach been a sandwich-box.

Having no more pike-tackle, we contented ourselves, before joining the carriage which was to convey us to Inverary, with a view of the old castle, now very tottery and dangerous to ascend. Numerous daws were rejoicing in the holes and cavities. The osprey's nest formerly graced a high pinnacle, the owners having an abundant supply of food wherever they chose to seek it. Sea-trout of a large size I have several times seen in the water-eagle's nest; but seldom pike, and never flesh of any kind.

A gamekeeper wantonly shot the last of these beautiful birds that tenanted Kilchurn's turrets, and none have replaced them. I was delighted, however, when trolling Loch Awe in the summer of 1850, twice to meet with a solitary osprey, probably the widower of Kilchurn Castle.

Having some arrangements to make at my summer-quarters on Loch Awe about the middle of May 1850, I received a message from my friend Peter Robertson of the Black Mount, the purport of which was, that as the sea-eagle had been sitting hard for some time, he hoped there was little risk of a disappointment like my last. Next evening I arrived at his house. The moon in her crescent, a little shaded by dappled clouds, was casting her pale glow upon the untroubled waters of the forest, tempting us to steal a night-march, in order to surprise the eyrie by break of day. The fragrant air of the mountains made the spirit rebound, and a slight touch of adventure gave zest to the whole. There was just sufficient light when we neared the islet to distinguish the two eagles winging their way to the mainland. Both lighted down near the shore, and eyed our proceedings with an indifferent bearing. It was plain enough the nest had been harried. With discomfited mien the forester ascended the tree, only to confirm what we felt sure of before. "I ken wha has served us this trick," said Peter, setting his telescope for a last look at our quarry on the shore. "He has swam in at nicht, the scoondrel, and ta'en the eggs or young for fear o' his lambs. Mony a time he has swam Loch Rannoch in the nicht-time *to see his lass.*" Upon inquiry, I found that this daring fellow had, night after night, braved the winds and waves of that stormy loch, re-enacting upon the solitudes of Rannoch the far-sung feat of the Hellespont. It naturally struck me, was his barefooted Scotch lassie worthy of such a courtship ? Does she, now a Highland dame, feel a secret pride when, sitting at her cottage door on a summer evening, she catches a glimpse of the serene surface of her native loch ? Or when the winter storm has raised the white wave, and the snowdrift has sent her stalwart shepherd to the hill, does she breathe the silent prayer of a thankful heart to the Preserver of his days when their love was young ? With such thoughts, I scarcely felt disappointment at the termination of my delicious night-walk ; and when I considered the many night-*swims* the shepherd had taken for it, I felt glad that he had gained *his prize,* though he had lost me mine.

THE PRESERVATION OF GAME.

About the beginning of the present century there was (compared with present circumstances) little ground reserved exclusively for deer. Many even of the forests were partially grazed by "black cattle," the deer being sparsely scattered over tracts of mountain and moorland, where now they can be seen in droves, tame almost like sheep.

The exorbitant prices freely offered for forest-ground, have tempted Highland proprietors to turn all they can into *deer* grazing (not meant for a pun); and the lessees, being naturally anxious to secure sport for their money, have crowded the pasturage with as many deer as it can possibly keep, thus following the example of grouse-tenants, but with the important difference in their favour, that deer, how numerous soever they be, if well fed in winter, don't die off by disease. If a man prefers to knock over half-a-dozen modern dwarfed harts to one of those mighty stags which were the boast of our ancestors, he has a right to his taste; but let any true deer-stalker drop a match to the stately animals of former years, and I am much mistaken if he would change it for the degenerate produce of half his season's present sport.

In like manner every thorough grouse-shooter will far more enjoy his twenty or thirty brace of *picked* birds, bagged over superior well-broke dogs, than had he shot on moors so crowded that dogs were quite superfluous, or shared in drives or *battues* where often nearly half the killed and wounded, unretrieved and unmarked, were left rotting around.

When grouse have increased beyond the limit that a moor can carry, no doubt the only remedy is to drive them. It is not so clear, however, that "the skill required by the driving sportsman is proportionally greater," or that "driving" is the best method for killing down the old birds, as some keen shots assert. Every sportsman knows that when packs are tame, his first mark on the rise of birds ought to be the old cock, although he is likely to be the furthest bird from the gun. If by mischance or bungling the old sire manages to escape the first few weeks of a season, he soon teaches his young brood to take wing on the first signal of danger. A good shot and thorough sportsman is therefore always detected by the number of old birds found in his game-bag, so long as packs sit to a point. A cock grouse at once proclaims himself by his larger size and defiant crow, also by being generally first to top the heather and catch the shooter's eye. An experienced partridge-shot can also pick out the cock of the covey with considerable certainty.

In a previous chapter I have tried to lay down plain rules how winter grouse may with care and caution be approached; but the general custom now is, when winged game grow shy and fretful, for sportsmen to exchange dogs for beaters, and so debar themselves from those finishing lessons in grouse-shooting which wild birds alone can teach.

All who prefer dogs to beaters are well aware that, when the first cold weather has thickened and strengthened the feathers of the birds, many of the old cock grouse, and some even of the old hens, leave the young broods and lead lonely lives until they pair in spring. These old birds prefer the rougher ground and rank heather for day shelter, and by November become so tame as frequently to sit fairly for a point. Only one very steady dog with excellent nose should be hunted at a time, and the grouse gillie ought to follow a long way in the rear.

Every favourable day till the 10th of December a tolerable bag of grouse can be made, eked out by snipe, hares, plover, and now and then a moor woodcock or two. In counting over my grouse at the end of each day, I generally found that at least half of them were old cocks, red as chestnuts, and unless kept in the larder for three weeks, tough as leather! So certainly did those tyrants of the moor form the staple of the day's sport, that when starting in the morning, the shooter's brief notice, "I am going after old cocks," was well understood.

If the ground is extensive, four or five guns, each accompanied by a steady dog and gillie, and keeping far enough apart not to interfere with each other, may range an immense tract of moorland; and I will venture to assert, that by this method far more wild old birds will be bagged than by driving, and the ground be not half as much disturbed. As partridge never break their coveys till pairing-time, the above remarks have no reference to them.

Some time ago I noticed in a leading London periodical, that the writer of a sporting article maintained that two-thirds of the bag of all driving-parties were old birds. Taking it for granted that the absurdity of such an assertion would soon refute itself in the experience of all true sportsmen, I took no notice of it at first. On the contrary, however, it was taken as an axiom by many minor lights, who founded upon it strong arguments in favour of grouse-driving. It never seemed to occur to these advocates for driving to make any difference between good and bad breeding seasons, which slovenly inadvertence might teach the value of their theories. Some years ago, after an ungenial spring had destroyed the eggs and young broods, an old sportsman wrote to me that his "Twelfth" bag (over dogs) was 40 brace, but there were only three young birds among the eighty! Of course the driving-parties of that year would bag scarcely any but old birds either. Take, however, a really good breeding season, when the experienced shot alluded to would have killed five or six young for one old bird—how would it stand with the drivers? The reply that old birds being more wary and stronger, would first reach the gun, will scarcely do. There might be some slight foundation for this retort at the very commencement of a season; but at the usual period when driving begins—viz., when grouse won't sit well to the point, it will not hold water. The young birds are by this time full-feathered, and as strong on wing as the old, which have long ere this thoroughly taught them the dread of man, and to take care of themselves, leaving them afterwards pretty much to their own resources. They will top the heather as shyly, and fly as swiftly, as their parents; and when the relative numbers of young to old birds are five or six to two, it is obvious enough how largely in the bag, at the end of the day, the young birds must outnumber their seniors. Let any thorough grouse-shooter, who knows a bird of the year *when quite grown*, from an old one, count his driving bag at the end of a hard day and judge for himself.

Driving shots are apt to insist on the superior "gunnery" of their practice, and certainly a fine performer at driven birds would most likely support his reputation at all times. I have, however, known men who (like famous artists of the pigeon-trap) had so completely modelled themselves on "stance sport," as miserably to disappoint their friends who persuaded them to try a day at other shooting. If, on the contrary, a first-rate shot over dogs fails at the driving stance, it is almost invariably from not calculating and allowing sufficient distance before swift-flying game, which a few lessons will soon enable him to correct.

A young driving shot is apt to fire into "the brown" of *packs* flying swiftly past, although at *single* birds he may shoot both well and quickly. The reason is that he has not presence of mind enough to select the bird (or birds, if he tries for a double shot) at which he means to fire. This is even more apparent when a promising beginner is shooting over dogs. He may knock down partridge after partridge should they spring singly, but at the first covey will often make a dead miss!

Avoiding the *questio vexata* whether more " skill " is shown in killing down our national bird by the help of dogs or with the aid of beaters, I would simply ask whether shooting to dogs or with beaters affords the best chance of a day's healthy exercise? Our fathers were indeed sorry walkers if, in a day on the hills, they did not cover far more ground than any grouse-driver " walking from position to position " possibly could; but let it be granted that the driving sportsman has plenty sharp marches from one shooting stance to another, there is nothing more injurious to the strongest constitution than frequent cold rests after brisk hilly walks; and it is these constant heats and cools that make our hill shepherds proverbially " short-lived."

It is a frequent grumble among sheep-farmers and shepherds that the whole Highlands will soon be under deer. The stalker may retort that the wool-growers have tried hard to turn them into one vast sheep-walk. As in every other mercantile matter, of course demand and supply will settle the question; and I for one feel grateful to the moneyed men who have rescued some of the finest sporting-ground, and most romantic hills and corries, from the treatment they would certainly receive at the sheep-grazier's hands.

Speaking with the experience of nearly fifty years in rented shootings, I affirm that only those who are willing to pay both sheep and game rent have real power over their sporting hills. They alone can prevent all intrusion, and set their neighbours at defiance. The only plan for those who share the ground in common with a stock-farmer, is to keep on the best possible terms with him. Should the game lessee and the sheep-tenant quarrel, the former is certain to get the worst of it.

He will soon find that he gets hard blows, and can only return by make-believes.

Since wintering stock in the Lowlands and summer grazing on the hills has come into vogue, it is the interest of every hill-farmer to burn as much heather as he can for summer grass—a profitable enough practice for sheep, but ruinous to game. Let the grouse-tenant, however, attempt to restrict a farmer in his spring burning, and the latter can safely and easily retaliate with tenfold vengeance. No one who has not suffered from it can imagine how these wholesale jungle-fires mar not only our sport, but debase and deaden our most picturesque mountain scenery; and it is only the proprietors or renters of deer-forests who can return year after year to find their cherished Highland resort fresh and unblackened as they left it, with the comfortable reflection, too, that no unfriendly foot has a right to disturb "the graceful flock that never needs a fold."

To kill deer or salmon is about the easiest sporting of the present day. The half-tame herds of modern forests are easily stalked; and driving deer like grouse-drives, is a lazy method of procuring chances without labour or skill. Boat-fishing for salmon, with expert oarsmen, levels that glorious pastime also to almost any one's capacity; but when gentlemen condescend to sunk fences in the forest, and stepping-stones at the salmon-pool, surely these are smart tricks invented within the sound of "Old Bow,"[1] to ensure the success of such as mistake herons for eagles, and firmly decline to soil their knees or wet their feet. Are not such paltry ruses degrading to any manly recreation? Do they not strip it of all adventure, and tone down the very excitement and romance?

The sporting season for deer ends early in October, when they exchange the summer red for a winter coat of coarse dusky brown. It is then the rutting-time for both red and fallow deer, when the former, with swelled throats, fringed by shaggy manes, roar like bulls; and the latter, equally rampant and pugnacious, grunt like swine. Both fight savagely for chieftainship of forest or park, and the smaller red-deer harts or fallow bucks have to retire, until the champions, weakened and emaciated, sneak into solitude, refreshing themselves by plunging again and again into their moss-hole baths.

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[1] An old forester, not a hundred miles from Braemar, having been often mortified by his most skilful stalks ending blank, had evidently complained to his shrewd wife of the *London* rifle. With a knowing wink she remarked to me of its *London* owner, "I'm thinkin' he's no bad at the missin'!"

In mild winters, followed by an early spring and propitious summer, both red and fallow deer come into first-rate order by the end of July, which is shown by the glossy red coat, and hardening and clearing of the velvety horns. A severe snowy winter and ungenial spring retard very considerably the growth and purity of their antlers.

Red-deer that are forced to confine themselves to woods for concealment, as in Mull, although they may be large and weighty, have far meaner heads than open forest stags. Their horns are stunted by constant shade, and I have shot three-year-olds with only knobs instead of horns. This deformity, however, enables them to thread thick plantations much more easily and pleasantly than had they been adorned with a royal head.

There are wild fallow-deer in some parts of Scotland, but, not being hardy enough to face the blast of exposed hills, are as much dependent on covert shelter as roes. I feel sure that these deer have all escaped from parks at no distant date. My father had a small herd of fallow-deer on one of his highest mountains, but they seldom showed themselves on the heather, generally haunting the pine-woods or oak-copses on the hillside.

The beginning of October always ends the season for red-deer stags. Some of the younger harts which have not had much of the forest run, may remain longer in condition; while the *yeld* hinds and "heaviers" (ox-deer) are good till Christmas. *Yeld* hinds are distinguished from the others by their lighter colour. Heaviers, of course, are hornless; but, being the exact shade of tidy hinds, ear-cropping is necessary to point *them* out.

The rutting-time for roe is early in summer, when "the bell" of the roebuck may be heard in all the woods they frequent. Naturalists have written that roes pair and keep in families—father, mother, and young ones—all winter. For the time the female is in season, no doubt these little deer pair; but directly after, the buck most likely seeks another mate. At all events, I can answer for it that bucks do not stick to their female and family after the rutting-time; for in all my shooting-quarters where roe abounded, I invariably saw the doe and her brace or single fawn without any buck, whenever the pairing-time ended. I think the idea of roes living in families originated in detecting the buck consorting with the doe, followed by her well-grown young, when she was in season; for in autumn old bucks are generally met with solitary, and remain so until early winter, when they become more sociable.

It is a singular fact that the gestation of roe lasts for nine months, while the far larger red or fallow deer only go seven months with young. Anatomists have found out that in the case of the roe, the embryo lies dormant for several months—viz., from the rutting till January. I have shot roes all my life in winter, and never saw signs of young in the does when cut up, till the middle of January or beginning of February, when the young roes always begin to form. About this time, too, the new horns of the bucks grow, the old ones having been shed about Christmas; and by the end of February they are finely shaped in the velvet, and beginning to harden.

The very reverse of fallow and red deer, roes are never in good order for the table until they have quite donned the mouse-brown winter coat in November. They assume the summer red, and clean the moss from their horns, long before the larger deer, and the female roe drops its young earlier in spring.

A flock or two of wild goats still linger among the rocky peaks of some precipitous mountains. Like fallow-deer, their ancestors, no doubt, escaped from captivity; but most unlike them in all else, these goats are the hardiest and most wary of all our rifle-game. They stand in the same relation to deer as ptarmigan do to grouse—preferring the bare inaccessible mountain cliff to all other feeding-ground. The kids are frequently dropped in February, and brave the late storms of that month as defiantly as their dams.

In feudal times, when the king of England and his powerful barons had whole districts of waste reserved exclusively for the chase, and the chieftains of the north were equally proud of their boundless forestry over mountain and moor, beasts and birds of prey, as well as those preserved for game, roamed these vast rugged solitudes, where now they could scarcely find a resting-place "for the sole of their foot." Wolves, deer, wild turkeys, and the great bustard, had once room and shelter even in fertile England; while in "stern Caledonia," the old white wild cattle of the country, and the now reinstated capercailzie, shared possession of the brown heath and the shaggy pine-woods with the mountain-stags and the national red grouse. And here the inquiry suggests itself, How has the banished "tetraoan chief" returned again to thrive and prosper? The problem is easy to solve. As population increased, and the dark dreary forests of the north were thinned or cut down, the giant grouse grew more and more scarce, until the last specimen was killed among the ancient woods of Inverness-shire.

Gradually, however, the lords of the heather began to reclaim and improve their immense wild tracts, and tree planting had its full share of their time, labour, and expense. Whole hillsides of larch and other copsewood sprang up like mushrooms; and by the time the "wood grouse" were brought back from Norway, many of these plantations had grown into formidable forests, fit homes for these noble birds, and exactly suited to their nature in every respect. Being gregarious at hatching-time, their nests were easily protected on their first introduction; and now, from a small beginning in Perthshire, they have adopted every favourable clump even within long distance of their first nursery at Taymouth.

I used to fancy that the last remnants of our native wild cattle were cooped up in a few high-walled parks, as dangerous objects of curiosity or interest. A few years ago, however, when threading a moor-road in Argyleshire, I stumbled on a domesticated herd of these white cows licking up the wayside grass. Far from being excited or angry, they permitted me to pass without challenge through the very midst of the "forty feeding like one." Their neat, well-set-on horns, black muzzles, snowy hides, and clean-made limbs, guaranteed both the antiquity and purity of their blood.

Wild turkeys, imported in the egg from America, frequently adorn our extensive preserves, where the rollicking shout of an old gobbler, more familiarly associated with a farmyard, sounds strangely out of place from the midst of an impenetrable thicket. These turkeys are unwilling to take long flights, and prefer to seek safety among the high branches of tall trees. The eggs are bought from Indians, who sell them to traders of this country; and the birds have the real "gamey" flavour, much superior to home-fattened ones.

The great bustard is no longer to be detected on Salisbury Plain or on the downs of Cambridgeshire, although about the end of last century, flocks of them, like small droves of sheep, were often noticed by shepherds or sportsmen. Many years ago I met a Suffolk squire, who a short time before had shot a female flying from one of his coverts to another. He told me he had no idea what bird he had shot; and as hen-bustards, like most of the *Gallinidæ* and *Cursores*, are very much less than cocks, and have not the rich markings of the male, there was nothing startling in its appearance on wing. This dwarf specimen of the ostrich family was most likely driven by stress of weather from the Continent, and being bewildered, had concealed itself in ground quite foreign to its nature.

Those who take the trouble to look around them, must observe how naturally every bird or beast chooses the ground best fitted to afford it sustenance and comfort, and that the perfect organisation of each bird or animal to its own mode of life fully testifies to the Hand that formed it. Every "neuk" of the globe is what may be called "utilised," and even the most barren corners are all taken possession of by creatures whose physical conformation is expressly fitted for obtaining a livelihood in such sterile spots, *and nowhere else.* But man, intellectual man, who alone of all living things is scattered over the whole world, and reigns above the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air, if turned loose to support himself even on the most fertile parts of his dominion with no other weapons or resources save what nature gave him, would be the only helpless creature in the whole creation of God.

Humbling though this may appear to be, it is in reality one great proof of his grandeur and dignity,—that with him alone the immortal soul is all in all; and with this stupendous gift, if he will only accept it on the free terms offered, he has the promise not only of "the life that now is, but of that which is to come." It is true that in the gloomy trackless forests where "the noble savage still runs," the red man is given far superior power to help and sustain himself than his white brother; but even *he* has recourse to artificial means for aid in his hunting craft, and when brought under the power of civilisation and religion, is forced to admit that his natural instinct has forsaken him, and that so far as regards wood-life he has become weak and powerless as a "paleface."

If, therefore, the only rational being on the face of God's earth chooses to turn away from the prospects and promises so bountifully held out to him, and to bound his aspirations by this nether world, contented that his mental powers were given him for no higher purpose than to assist and supplement his bodily ones, he will one day find how deeply he has insulted his Maker, by contemning the high destiny ordained for him before "the foundation of the world."

SALMON-ANGLING.

I SHALL hope to be pardoned if I claim for fishing the appellation of a science. I have never considered it, like shooting, a mere art. At all events, it has certainly not yet been brought to perfection; and the more able the angler, the more willingly will he admit, that not a season passes without his acquiring fresh secrets which he is not over-solicitous to tell. If a man fancies he can jump into proficiency after a season or two's practice, he is vastly mistaken; it is not a few fishing excursions now and then that form the adept, but the heedful experience of years. Take an instance; and suppose a man to be expert in the knack of throwing a line; —he is angling down a fine salmon-stream, followed by a finished master of the fly, and has just completed his last throw on a promising pool. Upon looking over his shoulder, his companion has hold of a good fish, at the very part of the cast on which he had bestowed the most care and pains: he immediately suspects that his comrade has been more knowing in the choice of a fly. But when the salmon is landed, he discovers, to his amazement, that it was attracted by a facsimile of the identical fly which a moment before he had so dexterously tendered to its acceptance! Every really first-rate fly-fisher will meet with such occurrences, when angling in the wake of a less gifted craftsman. And although to the looker-on it appears as if he had charmed the fish, yet it is only by a more scientific knowledge of the *exact* spots where the salmon are likely to come up, and by *lingering* over these with the motion of a glancing insect. This mastery of the gentle craft can only be attained by long practice and the most perfect command of the rod.

Angling for salmon may be called the deer-stalking of the streams. As in the first sight of the herd there is more excitement, and more satisfaction when you bring down the stag than in any other game, so in salmon-fishing, compared with all other kinds, the interest is greater when you raise a fish, and the satisfaction double when you lay him on the shingly bank. Like deer-stalking, however, it has its disadvantages; not the least of which is, the greater stock of patience required, and the greater uncertainty of the sport; unless, indeed, in preserved waters, where there is much less opportunity of displaying the superiority of an accomplished fisher over the ordinary performer. In unprotected water, for instance, should the weather be unpropitious, the best rod may flog the river for hours without stirring a fin; while a couple of fish is always reckoned a good day's work. Under the same untoward circumstances, the trout-fisher may often, by skill and perseverance, make out a very tolerable bagful.

I have heard it said by some pseudo-salmon-anglers, that the only pleasure was the hooking of the fish; and some have even declared they would not mind breaking every salmon directly after fastening him. Such men, to be consistent, should drop the salmon and stick to the trout—they will of course have more rises, and fix more fish; but their idea is absurd. If they have arrived at such a pinnacle of perfection, why not reduce their tackle to a single horse-hair? And if even this should be too strong for their exquisite skill, let them carefully cull the softest hair from the softest lock of their own softer heads.

However one may admire the dexterity of a master of the rod, as he casts his line between every opening among the trees, in a difficult river, yet I would rather see him manage his fish after hooking it; the cool nerve and delicate touch are the very perfection of art: and I should never pronounce a man a true salmon-fisher until I had seen him working one in a difficult situation. To throw a very long line, and to search the casts properly with the fly, are no doubt indispensable requisites; but a river fly-angler (for I don't here speak of either bait or loch fishing) who can work his hooked fish scientifically, will seldom be deficient in all the pre-requisites for fixing him; while the *rising* man, who has only fished preserved waters, where all is clear and open, should he hook a salmon in a difficult place, will most likely find that he has got hold of too strong a customer. And here we may ask, what was the magic in angling that captivated the intellects of such men as Chantrey and Davy? Sir Humphry, I suspect, would have looked rather queer if an officious friend had told him that all the sport was over when the forty-pound fish he landed above Yair Bridge was first hooked. And the great sculptor would have been equally astonished if the struggles of a sixteen-pound Thames trout had been treated with the like contempt! Whatever may be the reason, all true anglers know that the doubtful contest with a monster fish forms no inconsiderable part of the enjoyment, and his being laid upon the shelving bank the crowning point of all. No doubt the philosophy or the poetry of angling was one reason of its being the pastime of so many great minds; but when even contemplative Walton had fairly landed a gorgeous fish, I will venture to say that the triumph of success swallowed up every other pleasure.

But, without analysing their feelings, we know not how much we owe to this recreation of departed genius. Might not the safety-lamp have been lit amid the limpid waters of the Tweed, and some of the most beautiful creations of Chantrey's fancy have been first conceived on the green banks of Father Thames? Great men, however, can sometimes be great boys at the water-side. I have witnessed, with some amusement, the late Sir Charles Bell's comical vexation when an unlooked-for rod bore down upon him. His testy frown, when interfered with, was quite irresistible—proof enough of his eagerness in the sport. But perhaps this unbending of the bow may have given it double power when strung again. Sir Charles was only a second-rate fisher; and it often seemed curious to me that he, and several men of the brightest intellect whom I have watched at the river-side, were more ignorant of their favourite amusement than of any other thing. I should not have wondered at any want of practical skill, so much as at their ignorance of the habits of fish; their knowledge scarcely excelling that of the herd-laddie, who stared at them with vacant gaze.

Every newly-arrived salmon-fisher should secure the services of the ablest native practitioner who may proffer them, and he will thus be shown all the best casts of the river. It is absurd vanity to suppose one's self capable of discovering them without a great waste of time. No doubt a good salmon-angler will at once perceive the places where fish are most likely to harbour; but the misfortune is, that those casts which *appear* the most certain may sometimes deceive, while there are particular nooks, perhaps the least attractive even to an experienced eye, where a fish is pretty likely to rise: this is especially the case when the river is swollen. An angler must have but a poor knowledge of his craft, who, after once or twice fishing down a stream under proper guidance, could not afterwards manage for himself. It will be very necessary to get a list of the most killing flies in use, on the spot, and tie them of various shades and sizes.

Many city anglers have some country guide whom they affirm to be the best fisher in the kingdom. This professional, making merchandise of his local knowledge, has most likely taught them all they know; hence their reverence for his skill These "regular fishermen," by continually harassing all the unprotected water, from the opening to the close of the season, are the pests of the districts they haunt. Of course they know every mood of their own streams, and all the best flies and baits; but take one of these notables to a river he knows nothing of, and pit him against a few good average fishers, also ignorant of the water, and it will generally be found that there are many equal, some perhaps superior, to this "best fisher in the kingdom."

After having been thoroughly shown the casts of the river when swollen, it may be as well to have recourse to the guide again, when it becomes small and clear; as some pools that are excellent in flood, are not worth a throw when the water has fallen in—and others that were too foaming and boiling when the river was large, then come into prime order. The resorts of salmon, however, are much more easily detected when the river is low. This state of the water also requires considerable difference in the fly, chiefly in size. In my opinion, most salmon-fishers use too large hooks.

A stranger will often find his guide's knowledge superior to his practice; and that is the reason why the lower orders frequently excel those who might appear to a spectator to throw a better and finer line. Some anglers have an additional piece to screw on to their rods for long casts; a very thin butt is required when this piece is not added, and it is more apt to twist the rod. If equal in other respects, a man who has the power of throwing a very long line has the same advantage over a less gifted friend, in this particular, that a far-killing gun has over an inferior one, both in the same skilful hands. I should therefore advise every aspirant to excellence in salmon-fishing to attain this knack in the greatest possible perfection.

Large rivers require a large rather than a gaudy fly, which must decrease in size as the river narrows. Rapid brawling streams, on the contrary, take a gaudy fly rather than a large one. There are many Highland burns where salmon and sea-trout ascend in numbers in the autumn. These being generally shallow and rapid, a large fly would frighten as many as it would attract. If you fish with a small hook of sober colour in such troubled water, it might not catch their sight. Streams of this kind are in best order when tumbling over stock and stone something like the colour of London porter. The reason why a large fly of sombre hue is preferred for a stately river, arises from the depth and clearness of the water. A large fly is required to catch the attention of fish at the bottom, while gay colours would be apt to alarm them as they come up, when the water is so clear. When a large river is also rapid, as in the higher parts of the Tay, the fly may be proportionably bright. The size of the stream is an excellent criterion for that of the hook; and you may see every village urchin fishing for the spring trout in Tweed with a hook double the size of that which he uses in Gala, or any of the other tributaries, for the very same purpose; the favourite fly in both cases being a woodcock-wing, hare's-ear body, tied with blue thread.

In the deep rocky parts of the river, especially at the beginning of the season, put on your largest fly, trying a smaller should you not get a rise. In the rapid Highland streams, where, as I have said before, a small fly should be used, if you need any alteration, let it be in colour rather than in size. But on this point, as no invariable rule can be given, it will be better to get advice on the spot, if you can obtain it. For instance, though the Thames is so sluggish, and the trout so wary, the most killing fly there is what they call "the soldier-palmer"—that is, a bright-dyed hackle, red pig's wool, and gold tinsel.

When fishing for salmon only, never have two flies on your cast. The pleasure of hooking more fish will not make up for the vexation of losing one, even should more be secured in the long-run. This, however, must be a matter of taste. By changing the fly judiciously, you have nearly as good a chance with one as with two, although sometimes the fish may be a little longer in stirring. Don't be *too* certain that you have detected the most killing fly because fish take it well one day, as salmon, in some moods, will rise at anything you throw over them.

When large rivers are so low that the salmon reject the smallest legitimate fly, reduce your hook to the size of those recommended for the Highland streams—viz., what is called a sea-trout fly, and try before the sun is up and after it sets. It is needless to say that this fly must be of a very sober cast. With these reduced flies, and no glaring sunshine on the water, a fish may now and then be taken in the pools, when there would have been no chance with the smallest salmon-hook. An excellent fly for some light summer waters is a ptarmigan wing, dull yellow, or dark-green body, and a hackle half black and half red. This is first-rate for large sea-trout. In the Echaig, a blue jay-wing is a standing favourite, both with salmon and sea-trout, in every state of the river; and even in full flood they refuse a lighter wing. A dark mottled pheasant-tail for wing, red body, and gold tinsel, is also a choice fly for the grilse and salmon of that water.

The salmon almost always keep the channel[1] or deep parts of a river; so, if it is fordable, you will often have to change from one side to the other, as the heaviest stream alters its course. In small waters this is not difficult, but in great rivers one is frequently obliged to make choice of a side. This requires judgment, as much of the day's sport depends on securing that one which combined circumstances render the most desirable at the time.

Trolling with parr is a most deadly method, the bait being so gaudy, but it is ruinous to fly-fishing. If a parr has been trailed over a salmon, there is little chance of its rising to the fly for some time, perhaps not even for that day. The Scotch peasantry have invented a substitute for the Thames trolling-rod. I had one made by a country joiner, although without *joins*, which cast even the fly nearly as well as my best salmon-rod; but the point being stiff it was better adapted for parr or minnow. By unwinding the length of line you wish to throw from the reel, and then pulling it through the large rings, until only a few yards hang down with the appended bait, you can jerk it out something after the manner of an English troller, with this difference, that the cast is made over the right or left shoulder. Some prefer a supple top, which entices the fish from its lively spinning, but is more apt to miss them. After all, it is but a sorry shift for the beautiful smooth underhanded casts of the Thames anglers. Even a moderate performer with a London trolling-rod would excel the most skilful Highland parr or minnow fisher. There is also this great advantage on the side of the southern rod, that it injures the bait far less. But indeed the English manner of baiting, and their whole arrangement of trolling tackle, are very far superior to ours. I have fished with Thames trollers who were so particular as to bait differently with a bleak from a gudgeon.[1] A bleak is best on a dark windy day, from being showy—a gudgeon on a calm bright day, as its dark colour conceals and confounds the hooks. By the same rule, a loach is good in our lochs in clear weather. Bleak, however, is thought the best spinning bait on the Thames, unless at very rapid mill-dams, where the tougher gudgeon is not so apt to spoil.

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[1] This rule does not hold good with trout. Often the weather side of a stream, even when shallow, is the surest find for them, because the flies and other insects, being drifted across, are collected on the opposite bank. In *lochs*, they would be devoured almost as soon as their voyage had begun; therefore the contrary rule obtains.

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[1] A bleak, with three rows of three hooks, tied back to back, and a single hook the reverse way, to separate the lowest row from the one above: and one top hook through the lips of the bait. A gudgeon, two rows of three hooks, one of two, and a single hook for the lips. It is of no use to describe the process of baiting, as every man must take a practical lesson from a good troller before he can make any hand of it.

Young herring, from their shining scales, are found to be a most enticing bait for salmon. I have often tried them with success, especially in the lochs. Of course they must be used salt. The great objection to using them in the river is, that they are so very tender.

Should the water be confined, and the streams narrow and rapid, every inch may be searched by standing at the pool-head, and letting out line by yard-lengths, shifting the bait alternately from one side to the other until all the reel be nearly expended. Unless the river is flooded, very little lead is required. Pull your line, instead of winding it, slowly back again, searching as before, and when satisfied, wind up and proceed to another pool. When the river is broad, and you require to throw, you can make very far casts, as the parr is tough and not easily spoiled. Swing it gently back as far as you can, and then bring it forward in the same way. I have seen a man with only one arm, a perfect master of this kind of throwing—so much does it depend upon a little knack. Some will say that very rapid spinning is not good. But I have always found, both in boat and river trolling, whether with minnow or parr, that the more rapid and true the spinning, the greater my chance of stirring the fish. When trolling for salmon or large shy trout, I therefore adopt the mode of the Thames fishermen, on account of the superiority of the spinning, as well as the lesser risk of missing the fish.

When the diminishing water prevents the salmon from rising at the parr, you may still succeed with minnow, in the streams, especially about dusk. Very large trout, also, that scarcely ever rise to fly, dash freely after the minnow when the sun is down. They may also take it in the daytime, if the water should be a little swollen and the sky cloudy. But the river salmon-fisher is more indebted to bait than either parr or minnow; and for this reason, that salmon will take a worm when the river is so low that they refuse all other kinds of prey. In river-angling a large hook should be used, and a mixture of dew-worms and the small red, or the brandling if it can be procured. The bait should be massy, nearly as thick as your little finger. This is accomplished by pushing up all the odds and ends of the worms you put on, along the shank of the hook and the gut, more or less, according to the angler's fancy. In rapid running water, a good lump of bait is more easily seen from a distance, and if a fresh worm be put on the point of the hook, the imposture cannot well be detected in the moving stream. Lead the line to reach within a yard or so of the bottom, and search every inch of pool and stream, noticing the slightest tug. When you perceive the least straightening of the line, always go over the same inch until you either fix the fish, or disgust him. Never be in a hurry with a large fish: give him time, if possible, to gorge. A good hold is half the battle with a good salmon, as, in a long-continued struggle, an indifferent one is apt to wear and give way, often at the few last faint efforts to spurn the shore.

Behind large stones and in eddies there is always a good cast for worm; and in searching the latter you cannot be too particular. Try every variety of depth and current; in fact, seem to humour the line, though dexterously guiding it. No greater test of a practical bait-fisher than this.

I always like to have some bait in my pocket, even on the most propitious day for the fly; and I may cite the following successful results in support of this practice. There are four pools at the top of the Echaig, a little separated from the other casts. As the season advances, the large fish are very apt to remain in them. My custom was generally to begin at the lowest of these pools, fish up with fly to the top, and, if unsuccessful, to put on bait, and rake them down again. In the autumn of 1847, I rose a salmon in the bottom pool at the first throw—gave him a rest, and rose him again. Another ten minutes' rest, while I put on a smaller fly. He rose a third time; but not wishing to disgust him, I passed on to the pool above. A second salmon rose near the tail of the pool; but although I gave him the customary "law," and also changed my flies, he was stubborn. I therefore walked off to the two top pools, but no fish moved in them either at fly or bait. I returned to my first salmon—up he came again, keen as ever. I left him once more for his neighbour in the pool above, but his mood was still unchanged. I therefore put on bait, when he dashed at it like a bull-dog. In about twenty minutes I had him extended on the grey shingle, half on land, half in water, when his hold broke. I rushed down, but had the mortification to see him waddle into the deeps again. With my crest a little lowered, I descended to my *quondam* friend in the first pool; a fifth time he rose fiercely. I therefore waited the usual time, and he rose again. Upon the seventh trial, however, he refused; so I gave him the same lure which had nearly proved fatal to the other. Instantly he was at it and fast. But a more cross-grained "sea-king" I never contended with. It was about twelve o'clock when I hooked him. At one, he was fresh as a "laverock." About forty yards below, a tree that jutted over a deep part of the river prevented my leading him down-stream, so he had every advantage, and, I must say, seemed inclined to take it. Sometimes he would sulk, and when with great trouble I shook him off the bottom, he would rush up or down the pool, terminating his vagaries by a fair somersault. Half-past two o'clock, and my arm quite tired. I looked often to the road for assistance, but no one appeared. A little before three, I saw a car, and hailed the driver, who good-naturedly left his vehicle, and to my question if he could gaff a fish, replied that "he wasna gude wi' the flee; but gie him a stroke at the sawmont wi' the clip, and he wadna seek anither." I gave him my gaff, and began to strain and shake the salmon, if possible to bring him within the reach of my self-confident ally. At last I brought him with some difficulty near the fatal weapon. The "stroke" was given, but it was too plain the "sawmont" would require if he did not "*seek* anither!" The man had scraped him, and thus rendered him desperate. Down he pushed, past the tree. It was not of so much consequence now, for I gave my rod to the driver for a moment (who handled it exactly like his whip), got round the tree, and was all right. Having the command of the stream, I soon brought the fish under the bank, when the man gaffed him cleverly. Although so game, he was only ten pounds weight; and had I not been hampered with the tree, I should have managed him in half an hour. I anticipate the remark, "A bad day for the fly is often a good one for the worm." This maxim was not applicable in the present case; for with one of the flies, several times refused by the salmon, I hooked and landed a three-pound sea-trout in the next pool I fished. No sooner had I dropped it into my bag, than a five-pound grilse sucked down the same fly as eagerly as the trout did, and shared the same fate. I had no more time to spare; but if I could have remained, I should probably have had prime sport with the fly, as I left a beautiful reach of the river untried.

About a fortnight after, the water was again in excellent trim for the fly, and I was alongside of the pool I considered surest for a heavy fish. After twice going carefully over it with the most approved flies, and without even a break, feeling almost certain that a salmon lodged there, I again had recourse to the worm. At the very foot of the pool, where it joined the shallow, my bait stopped, and the peculiar twitching of the line made good my prognostic. Allowing him time to gorge, I struck, and had hold of a noble fellow. After a good struggle, I landed the largest fish I ever secured in the Echaig —fifteen pounds and a half when I brought him home. This day, however, neither salmon nor sea-trout would look at a fly.

A raw salmon-fisher is seldom aware what sized fish has risen. It often appears much smaller than it actually is, from the foreshortening caused by the salmon coming straight up, seizing the fly, then descending head foremost; which last motion generally gives a glimpse of its tail. Instead of this, if the fish should flounder its whole body out of water in coming at the fly, the effect is very imposing, and even a six-pounder will appear to the novice a perfect monster.

When hooked fish splash on the top of the water, take great care, or you may break their hold by too tight a strain. The opposite extreme is equally dangerous, as they may then shake the hook out of their mouth. It is the nicety of art to let them get down without falling into either error. Should the river be small, of course most of the heavy fish will be collected in the deepest pools. Pay most attention to them. When stones and rocks are easily seen at the bottom, there is a clearness either in the air or water that hinders fish from stirring freely ; you have then, perhaps, a better chance with worm than anything else. Also, when leaves and other rubbish come floating down, they frighten fish, and prevent their seeing the fly. The nearer the bottom you angle, of course these impediments are less in the way. They are most troublesome on a windy day. When foam is thick upon the water, fish rise badly to fly. A succession of floods, or, as we call them, "spates," will gorge the fish, and make them shy, especially of taking bait. In landing a salmon or any heavy fish in a river, if possible get below him. You are thus favoured by the stream. Whereas, by standing above, you hang the fish's weight against the current, and are more apt to strain and break its hold.

I shall here add an instance or two of the fastidiousness of salmon at one time, and their voracity at another ; by which it will be evident that there are days when a very bungler may capture them, and others when all our skill is well needed. In summer, when the Teith was rather dwindled, a Highlander rose a grilse with a small sea-trout fly. He, of course, gave him a rest, and tried him with a larger, to no effect ; went back to the small one, and again rose him. He then put on, in succession, a worm, a parr, and a minnow, without getting a tug ; and, as a last resource, cut off the parr's tail,[1] when the fish came up greedily and fastened. He would never have wasted so much time had he not known that, from the low state of the river, there was little chance of another rise all day. On the other hand, a shepherd lad was looking dreamily over the Brig of Turk, upon the large deep hole below, overhanging which the martins had formed a colony in the sand-bank, when one of the young martins fell out of the nest into the river, and was immediately gulped down by a large salmon. The shepherd procured a bait-hook and the coarsest tackle, took another young bird out of the nest, and baited; the fish at once came up again, was hooked, and landed.

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[1] The parr-tail is an excellent substitute for the minnow, and in some moods

Salmon are certainly far scarcer now than formerly, and the average weight of those taken is much decreased. Sixteen-pound fish are now as rare as twenty-pounders used to be many years ago. Several reasons are suggested for this falling off, but the most rational I have heard is the dexterity of the sea-netters close to the mouths of all our good salmon rivers and streams, and latterly the rage for thorough draining, which makes the rise and fall of the rivers both sudden and extreme. In consequence, the winter spawning-beds are often left so shallow as to be chilled and rotted by frost.

When living in the neighbourhood of the Border river a good many years ago, the proprietor of an estate on its banks once remarked to me, that salmon-fishing was "too *slow* work for him." He was a keen trouter, and in the constant habit of whipping the Ale, the Rule, the Leader, and the Gala. It is still more common to hear these fast trout gentlemen complain that trolling for the *Salmo ferox* is "tiresome work." A first-class fisher (for no one deserves the name who has not been thoroughly indoctrinated into the mysteries of the salmon, as well as the various scientific methods of trolling for large fish) will quietly smile, perhaps *seem* to agree, and let it pass.

of the water is to be preferred. It is easy to bait with, and bears very rough usage on the hooks. The head and shoulders are cut off in a slanting way, and you bait in the same manner as with the minnow or parr.

He is quite willing to defer to the opinion, albeit dogmatically asserted, that a good yellow trout requires the same skill to capture as a twenty-pound salmon, and affords quite as much sport. Of course he is not careful to make proselytes who might turn into competitors, to jostle him on a favourite loch or river.

Trouting is, however, only the germ of salmon-angling. The best trouters, whenever they have opportunity, take to the salmon, and only a sparse sprinkling even of them attain to eminence at large fish. With a small rod and fly I have known dozens of excellent anglers, some even mere lads, who were pretty expert; but a true salmon-fisher is rare. It is pleasant to witness the enthusiasm of a trouting devotee, firmly intrenched in the conviction that his own is the most scientific department of the art. Let him be advised, however, to get out of this nursery fishing, to be a salmon-angler if he can, and he will be the first to acknowledge its vast superiority over yellow trout, in practice, science, and sport. I never yet met with a finished salmon-angler who had not been an adept at trout, although I have known many excellent trouters who never could get beyond second or third rate salmon-fishers.

It is only in a stream of considerable bounds that the eminent angler can fully display his power. Those brawling brooks where salmon and grilse only ascend during floods, and which can be commanded by a grilse-rod, are too much akin to trouting to suit his taste. Such being, I will venture to say, the feeling of all our leading salmon-anglers, it follows that to command much water is a primary requisite. To give more power in this respect, I have for many years adopted the plan of what is called spinning the line. This consists in slowly pulling it through the rings with the left hand, at the same time you are playing the hook on the water. The advantages consist, first, in the more enticing movements of the fly; next, in the greater command you have of the tackle, should a fish rise; lastly, by enabling you to take fuller and freer casts, especially when trees or other obstacles are behind. Although not properly spinning, yet the line is pulled in exactly like underhand trolling; with this difference, that in bait-trolling the whole line is drawn through the rings (except the yard at the rod-point with the appended bait), and lies coiled on the bank, preparatory to the next throw; whereas in salmon-fishing you can only draw in line until it touches the ground. By also giving one or two turns of the line round the hand, there are about two yards and a half saved from the back cast, and added to the clean sweep of the river. Considerable knack is required; but when a man is quite master of the cast, the line is delivered straight as a rule, and the fly lights soft and smooth at the end of it. Having thus fished with a long line to the foot of the pool or stream, most anglers would wind up, and proceed to new water. I am loath to do so (unless stinted by time), without giving the most likely spots another chance by winding over them. This is done by fishing backwards; not *up* stream though—that would never do. Throw the line fairly over the water you expect a fish to lie in, then wind up *very slowly* over him; continue taking a step or two backwards, repeating your long throw and slow wind over these choice places until you are satisfied.

The angler, if he pleases, may cast and wind over alternately in going down the stream, and not fish it backwards at all; or he may reserve his wind-over for a favourite spot, where he is certain a salmon has taken post. But the man who knows the river best will always make the most of the wind over: for even an able angler without this knowledge may waste too much time in winding over tempting places where fish seldom harbour. It is the exact perception of the seats of fish, and where they may shift about according to the varying moods of the river, that constitutes half the science of angling. As the late eminent Dr Munro used to say of medicine, "It is but shrewd guessing after all." Nevertheless, as in physic the shrewest guesser is first physician, so in angling the shrewdest guesser, if not *always* the ablest, will go far to be the most successful fisher.

This winding over fish is most deadly. I have again and again moved them in my backward course, when they never stirred in the ordinary way. Often, also, having raised a fish several times, and fairly put him down, I have hooked him at the first wind-over, and that, too, with the very rejected fly. As to changing the fly, the angler must be guided by his own judgment, according to circumstances. For instance, if a fish bangs up keenly the first time, misses the fly, then comes up languidly the second time, it is a bad sign. A change and long rest may be as well. If, however, the salmon only bells up at first, and gives a fine bold dash the next time, give him a third trial with the same fly. He will be pretty likely to take hold the third rise. Should he not, but still continue his free offers, patience is your best course. Rest him, and renew the attack at intervals with any fly you fancy most enticing. I have sometimes fixed these playful fish after nearly a dozen rises, and as often as not with the original fly that moved them. They are apt, however, to hook tenderly if they take hold at all. When a fish springs freely the first rise, I am inclined to clap my fly instantly over him a second time. Very often he will come up wickedly and fix. Should he not stir, or only make a languid roll or a bell up, I should feel much disposed not to disturb him for some time; and when I did, it would be with a fresh fly.

Sometimes (but rarely) if the size of fly suits the stream, salmon will come up and fasten on any colours that may be thrown to them. They are oftener so very particular as to refuse all flies but those of the very same shade, dressed exactly alike. Both these moods of fish, however, are exceptional; and salmon or grilse, as a general rule, may be more or less tempted by several judiciously selected hooks. Although the second of these moods may, at first, try the ablest angler, yet, after the favoured fly is found out, it is all plain sailing enough. If he is baffled in discovering it, the best fisher is pretty much on a par with the worst. The third and most common mood of fish will always afford fullest scope for the thorough salmon-fisher to prove his skill.

Every successful fly-angler for large fish knows what I have stated; but as a help to the inexperienced, I will copy from my memorandum-book two days' practice, as fair examples of the first and second mentioned moods of fish. As the surest test, I have chosen both fishing-days from thin, clear, summer water, when I had two flies on my cast.

First mood, when fish will rise at almost anything. Began to fish at six in the evening, leaving off at nine. A brightish body, though not gaudy, and light wing for trail, with a dark fly for bob. Killed five fish—three at the trail, and two at bob. All fastened at the first rise except the last fish. I touched it slightly the first time, gave it a long rest, when, in spite of being pricked, it came up again and fixed firmly.

The fastidious fishing-day was from five to half-past eight in the morning. In second pool rose a fish at both bob and trail several times. At last, fairly put him down. Gave the usual rest, and exchanged the trail fly for another deeper in colour and longer in shape: hooked and killed him with the change the second cast. Landed three more fish with this trail fly: all hooked at the first rise, and not a fin would stir at the bob.

It must be owned that the caprice of salmon does now and then set at nought all rules and calculations. When my son returned from Cambridge for a few days' fishing at Easter, I gave him the first of the water, and tied for him some killing flies. He rose a large fish twice in one of the lowest pools. In the centre of our fishing stretch another salmon belled up. As both showed signs of laziness, we left them till evening, when they were pretty certain to be more lively. Near the top of the water he landed a small fish of seven pounds. As it was getting late, I proposed we should try the centre fish, reserving the low one for the next morning. "To lose the chance of the large fish! rather lose *half-a-dozen* dinners." So off he trotted, leaving the smaller one to me. At the first cast I made, he plunged freely out of the water; but although I wasted near an hour trying every fly I possessed, and resting him between, he never moved a second time. When nearly dark, and dinner over, the Cantab arrived with a clean fish of twenty-one pounds. He had again started the morning salmon, at intervals, three times, and quite disgusted him; fly after fly had been *wound* over him in vain. My son had actually wound up his line, and with rod on shoulder, walked a few paces on his road home. All on a sudden he remembered having in his box one untried fly, which we had both proved thoroughly useless on our river. At the first free sweep of the before and *since* neglected lure, this large cautious salmon rose keenly, fastened firmly, and after an exciting run of three-quarters of an hour, was safely brought to land.

And here I would caution all good fishers never to brag of hooking "the largest fish they ever had on," unless they bring him home. They may safely leave that boast to the unsuccessful, who are really apt to fancy every salmon they lose a monster. I was much amused one morning to hear that a sedulous brother of the rod had hooked a tremendous salmon the evening before, and lost him after some hours' play. The story was simply this: A short time before dusk he fixed his fish, which creeped down to a heavy pool below, and sulked. No doubt it succeeded in rubbing the hook out of its jaw into a sunk root or tree. The careful angler remained with his rod on full bend, till some of his anxious family found him near midnight in this interesting position: he then broke, not his fish, but his *fast,* which he ought to have done hours before.

The constant floating of trees is a serious objection to angling on the Dee; not so much from the rafts coming over the pools, as the constant scraping of the setting poles on the bottom, and stray stems of trees breaking away from the float, which often settle in the finest casts of the river and block them up. I always transpose the old adage,

"A mile o' Don's worth twa o' Dee,
Except for salmon, trout, and tree"—

thus,—

"For salmon's sport, a mile o' Dee
Beats twa o' Don—keep aff the tree."

In spite of every caution, I have, like the above patient fisher, often lost the first boast of the Dee by means of the third. Once, when a good salmon was playing freely, and the run at its height, the fish stopped suddenly in the throat of a rapid stream. The weight of water giving the line and rod's point a lively look, quite deceived my companion, who kept insisting that the fish would soon move. Having doubts, I gave him my rod, and wading in, easily detected the sunk tree wedged across the current, with my fly stuck in the wood.

On the last day of the fishing season in 1853, the river being too large, and fish stubborn, I raked all the water with my most deadly flies, from the top to the second lowest pool, without a single offer. In this pool was a "potted" fish, which I had raised and touched on two former occasions. That very morning, before breakfast, I had wandered to the pool with my rod; but a heavy rime kept him down. After breakfast the sky had clouded over, and I felt confident that this cast was my best chance in the whole water. I therefore reserved it as a *bonne bouche* for the end of the day. It was growing dusk when I delivered my line over the very inch where I knew he lay. The rolling boil-up and stiffened rod-point instantly followed, and I played my fish with great content. He was in shallow water, and quite spent, when the line seemed glued to the bottom, although I distinctly felt the salmon at the end of it. On creeping forward, I saw he had sneaked under one of these disgusting trunks, and being out of reach of the gaff, my only chance was, if possible, to raise the shore-end of the tree. As I attempted this, he put out all his remaining spirit, and I broke, at the very close of it, the only fish I had raised on that last day. In spring the same year, when leading a clean salmon through a succession of rapids, I was arrested by a set-line, cunningly hung across the river by means of sunk stones. It was some time before I discovered the barrier, which was then easily disposed of. Even without these impediments, the length of time a salmon may baffle the rod-fisher is by no means a certain criterion of its dimensions. Some fish are far more game than others. The water also, or the banks, may so favour them, that a determined plucky little fish may work fiercer, and even longer, than one twice its size. Others, again, have the generalship to avoid "spurts," and, by simply leaning their weight against the rod, to husband their strength. These cool-tempered ones, always wearing and rubbing the line on rocks and stones, are far more dangerous—especially to light tackle—than they seem.

One charming spring evening in March, when crossing Coilantogle Bridge, after minnow-trolling Loch Vennachar for trout, the fine trim of Garwhinnie water tempted me to try its best pool for a salmon. The stream of Garwhinnie takes its rise in Loch Vennachar, but soon joins Lennie water, nursed by Loch Lubnaig, when the junction forms the stately river of Teith. The clean spring fish that lie in both these streams, although very scarce, are large in size—generally from fifteen to twenty-five pounds. They are chiefly taken by parr-trolling. Having tied a couple of salmon-flies for Teith the day before, they were, by mere accident, stowed in my hat; but I was forced to be content with the small two-handed loch-rod and fine trouting-gut. I had, however, slight expectation that my toy tackling would be put to the proof, and sauntered down Bochastle Heath, more for the pleasure of the evening walk than from hope of a happening fish.

The common saying, that success comes when least expected, may not be true. The surprise impresses it more on the memory, when failure would scarcely have been disappointment. In the present case, when a salmon sucked down my fly at the eddy formed by the rock in the middle of this pool, and the web of his tail proved him no minnow, my satisfaction was somewhat damped to feel the very slight bond that united us. The narrow stream stopped all risk of the trouting-reel being run out; but, though clear as silver, and fresh from the sea, the fish never attempted it. For two hours he only scraped the bottom or sulked, and when persuaded out of one deep linn, he floated down to its neighbour below, only to repeat the weary round of every stock and stone against which he could rub my chafing line. Twice, when tumbling over shallows, I could easily have clipped him, but had no gaff. At last, without a struggle on the fish's part, or a strain on mine, the worn and ragged casting-line parted in two, and the little rod straightened in my hand. His weight was evidently from sixteen to twenty pounds.

When a boy, trolling Loch Lomond for yellow trout, I hooked a large clean salmon with materials as slender. He quietly followed my lead when I wound him up to the very stern of the boat, wondering what kind of accommodating creature I had got hold of. Under my very rod's point there was a sullen plunge on the top of the water, and that was all I saw of the first salmon I ever hooked. The practical lesson was worth far more than the fish—namely, never to come to such close quarters, *at first,* with so formidable a customer, especially when he seems much inclined to humour you: you are sure to have the worst of it.

In some of our northern rivers, such as the Ness, the underhanded up-stream throw is much in use. But the whole style of fishing is so ungainly and unsportsmanlike, that few gentlemen would willingly adopt it. The one great advantage consists in being able to fish water thoroughly hemmed in by trees. A very strong clumsy rod is required to "pitch" (for that is the proper term) the line up the stream. It is not allowed to circle behind at all, but the strong rod is giving the underhand forward motion to half of the line before the other half leaves the water.

As to up-stream trouting, many will reject it on account of the perpetual lashing it entails. There is this in its favour, though, that in trout-fishing, the more casts, the more rises. All good trouters are aware of this, and never put off time by leading their hooks, except in lochs and the still deeps of streams. When whipping for yellow trout, my advice is, to take a cast wherever you can get a good one, whether up, across, or down stream; to repeat them as often as possible, and never to drag your flies except in still water. I will quote the words of a little work on Tweed Angling, by an old fisherman, written years ago, to show that this has been the adopted principle of trouting for many a day. "Throwing the line for trout does not require the same regularity of plan and manner as the casting for salmon, since it is often more necessary to throw *aslant upwards* or straight across, then downwards. And indeed, in trout-angling generally, it is very improper to hang the fly on the stream, far more so to pull it against it. In fishing either stream or pool, cast the fly across, or slanting considerably upwards, and *let it float down the current of its own accord.*" Although the unintermitted "wapping" is not pleasant at first, yet with a small one-handed trouting-rod, few men of average strength will mind this when the arm has become habituated.

If the river falls *rapidly*, salmon or grilse never take well. A shine on the water also makes them still. I have heard many fishers say that, on a dewy morning, salmon never rise well at the fly. I have now and then experienced the reverse, especially in hot July weather. After once going over thin dwindled water, it is useless to try again, as the fish are pretty certain to see you the first time. In some rivers which run chiefly through peat-mosses, fish seldom rise well when the water is of the highly-prized coffee-brown. This is worth attention; for whenever such rivers brighten up, they take famously. In July, when the days are sultry, fish are dull and sick with the tepid water, even in the late evening. Becoming very hungry after the cool of the night, morning fishing from five till nine is always most deadly then; earlier, is often too dull and grey. Before the weather grows so hot, the evenings are preferable, the day sun having warmed, but not heated the water, and his glare becoming mellowed or subdued. In decidedly cold stormy days at the beginning of the year, they take best, of course, in the middle of the day. When the air looks blue on a frosty evening, there is good chance of a fish rising; but when the mountains are veiled in their misty drapery, it is a very unpropitious sign. A brilliant day at the first of the season is not good, especially for red fish; a rough wind is best then. In spring, change from larger to smaller flies; in autumn, from less to larger. Always fish with larger flies in the evening than in the daytime; but do not apply this rule to the early morning. At the opening of the season, even clean fish much frequent quiet water at the tail of the pools.

In boat-fishing a salmon-pool, begin at the foot; throw straight out across stream (not a point down, as from the bank); and by making the boatman row slightly aslant, and away from the pool, as it were sloping up-stream, you have beautiful command of your tackle. The fly plays longer on the water, and by following the motion of the boat, rises the fish better, and, lastly, by keeping the line "stent," hooks more surely. In repeating each cast, always make the boatman work closer to the pool, starting away from it again as soon as the fly is delivered. When stream-fishing, especially if the current is strong, you must begin at the top, and fish down as from the bank; but in so doing the salmon can more easily detect the boat. Should the water be fine and clear, all river boat-fishing is apt to scare fish, if clean, into the pools above; and even red or grey fish will creep down into the pools below.

Hooked fish, fresh from the sea, however, are apt to turn down-stream, and dash through rapids and cataracts. My two hardest races down the Dee were with salmon only a day or two out of the salt water. They spun through a succession of torrents, and the footing on my side the river being nothing but ragged rocks, the sight of smooth water at the end of the rapids was very welcome. I have a pretty vivid recollection of having my fun for reward at the close of one of these bursts. When the fish was half out of the water, on the sloping bank, I desired a young companion to lift it ashore. In doing so, the salmon slipped through the small fingers. In defiance of me and my screams, the single gut was seized, of course snapped, and the fish, an eleven-pounder, lolloped back into the river. I barely saved him; for the moment my little girl clutched the line, I threw down the rod, stood ready to cut off his retreat, and by a strong pitch of both hands heaved him ashore.

I was not so fortunate with a grilse a few months later. I had risen at four, and after killing three fish, hooked the grilse in the last pool I meant to try. As I never use a gaff if I can help it, I had led my victim over several shallows, stranding him at the end of a ready little creek. My rod was comfortably grounded, and I was within a yard of grasping the captive, when its hold broke. The moment the fish felt free, it seemed imbued with the spirit of half-a-dozen harlequins. Clearing the tiny bay like quicksilver, carefully avoiding an inviting deep which would have insured its destruction, the wonderful instinct of the creature guided it through a succession of intricate shallows, and in spite of my kicks it gained the channel of the river. I had the curiosity twice to examine this place, and had I not proved it, could scarcely have believed that any fish had wit enough to extricate itself from such a dilemma. What chiefly excited my wonder was, that a fish *in such a peril* should have purposely avoided deep water for shallows which it was so unlikely ever to thread. The shallows, however, led to the body of the river, and to freedom, while the tempting deeps, being enclosed on every side, were certain captivity and death.

In clear water, two flies on your cast, *unless small*, will often make salmon shy. There is no more killing bait for trolling than gold or silver fish; but from their gay look, if salmon do not bolt *at* them, they will bolt *from* them. The same may be said of salted herring-fry. When salmon get accustomed to their bright glare, they fly the parts of the river where they are used.

The wholesale net-murder, in some of our best rod-rivers, must have been noticed with disgust by all salmon-anglers. If a remedy is not found for this slaughter, the rod-fisher's occupation will soon be gone. The lower fishings suffer first, the dearth of fish gradually extending to the higher. As long as the run continues, of course the lower stations have the first chance. The sport is then often good; but when the run ceases, the tables are turned. I have then seen the lower water nearly empty, when there was good sport twelve miles above. The reason is sufficiently plain. The first of "the run" rush to the top of the river, and occupy it; those that follow take possession of the next pools and streams; and so on, till the run is exhausted. In former years, at the proper season, nearly the whole river was tenanted by these "back fish." How stands the case now? When the run stops, scarcely the half of some of our finest salmon or grilse rivers have a fair complement of "back fish," while only a meagre sprinkling condescend to inhabit the lower water, how inviting soever both stream and pool may appear. I have often noted this on the Dee, where, at the end of a salmon or grilse run, the sport was good at Ballogie and Aboyne, while there was scarcely a fin near Banchory.

A scarcity of fish is a still greater drawback at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. At that season all the finest salmon take possession of their pools for the winter, and are called "potted fish." Of course they are always at home—may be easily raised—but are far more shy of taking hold than fresh-run fish. If they do fasten, they often hook slightly. An indifferent angler may move them day after day, and scarcely fix one. There is fine scope, however, for a scientific craftsman, who, by judiciously tying or selecting flies to suit the varying moods of the water, and choosing the most propitious weather and time of day for fishing, generally secures a fair proportion of these, the largest salmon in the river. It is most tantalising to see an autumnal leviathan flounder up, tumble over the fly, and never even touch it.

At the end of August, when the Dee was dwindled to a thread, and the salmon fairly "set up" for some time, I rose an old fish about dusk, with a sombre small fly. After waiting till nearly dark, I fastened the same fly to the thinnest trout-gut, and soon fixed him. Instead of turning down stream, as he would most likely have done if fresh-run, he bored up against a confined rapid current, the weight of which was too much for my slender tackle, and snapped it. Early next morning I was at my friend again, armed with the purest salmon-gut. The sky was cloudless; and while deliberating whether to run the risk of disgusting him with the stronger tackle, he flapped his head and shoulder above water. This, with the bright sun and clear river, decided me. Discarding the salmon-gut, I whipped on a gossamer cast again—hooked and lost him in the same way! I never saw this fish again; and as he had two hooks and gut-lengths attached to his jaw, no doubt he was frightened out of the pool.

When the water was in much better trim, I fixed another of these old fish in the middle of the day. Being but tenderly hooked, he soon slipped off. I tried him at five o'clock next morning—hooked him firmly—and after some very spirited play, his hold broke when I was leading him unresistingly through the shallow. The day following, about two o'clock, I was at this pool, with little hope of success. To my surprise, I fairly hooked and landed the same salmon. Some, I know, will shake their heads, with, " A different fish, no doubt." My proofs to the contrary are strong. First, it was so early in the autumn that there were very few salmon much discoloured by the fresh water, and no potted ones that I had yet seen. At the very first rise I noted how much he was darkened by being long in the river, and saw at once that he had chosen his winter pool. Next, when hooked both the former times, I calculated his weight between ten and twelve pounds; when I secured him, he almost touched the eleven pounds. Lastly, he never left the pool at all—was finally killed in it—and *no other fish supplied his place.* This I made sure of by constantly throwing a cast over the pool in passing, and fishing it blank to the end of the season. Upon mentioning these facts shortly after to a Dee angler of thirty years' practice, he capped them by a feat of his own, well known to the old fishers of the place. He hooked a fifteen-pound fish at Banchory Bridge—worked him for half an hour—and lost him, when quite done up, by a piece of the gill giving way, which he found attached to the hook. Next day he again hooked a salmon in the same cast, and soon noticed a white mark on his lip. When brought to land, there was a hole corresponding exactly to the bit of gill on his hook the day before.

Another well-authenticated Dee-side story of former days has been told me. An old General hooked a salmon, which ran out all his wheel-line. The important knot at the line-end had been neglected, so he helplessly witnessed its disappearance through the rings into the rapid current. Ruefully wandering back, he got a glimpse of some line floating in a quiet bay, about a mile below the place where he lost the fish. It was easily seized, brought through the rings again with great deliberation, and of course well knotted. In winding up, to his surprise, the salmon was still attached to the fly, and easily landed.

Instances like the above show the exciting character of autumn rod-fishing, as well as the advantage of finding out the exact stations of these "back-end" salmon. How many of these tempting pools are tenantless now, that yearly used to harbour one or two of these sporting harvest-fish, anglers of the lower stations of some of our best rivers know to their chagrin. And what is worse, the dearth of finny inhabitants will increase until some stringent restrictions are laid on the angler's great foe—the net. In all those rivers where netting is encouraged to anything like the present extent, not only will the salmon-rod soon be useless, except to hang an idle ornament in the hall, but the needy or greedy proprietors of fisheries will find they have outwitted themselves—that their rents are growing less year by year, until they end in being merely nominal.

Salmon-anglers are regarding with much interest the artificial propagation of salmon in the Tay and other rivers where the experiment is being tried; but whether the increase will ever reward the trouble of raising them, has yet to be proved.

My late brother imported ova of Geneva trout to be hatched in the salmon-breeding ponds at Rossdhu. It was intended to stock the Arrochar moor-lochs and also Loch Lomond with these magnificent foreign trout. About 200 young fry were introduced into Lochs Sloy and Garable some years ago, but have not made any appearance yet. Indeed there has been no *decrease* in the number, or *increase* in the size, of the Loch Sloy trout; for my sons, in four hours' fishing, captured twenty dozen last summer, no bigger than I remember them when a boy—proof sufficient that the foreign intruders have as yet made no impression on the Arrochar Highlanders. The watchers have never detected one monster trout all last season in either loch. We neglected, however, to prove the point by trolling, although we had a small skiff for the purpose on Loch Garable.

The Rossdhu ponds were often sadly poached by a heron. Being unsuccessful in his attempts to shoot it, my brother suggested to the head-keeper to try a "bogle." The effigy was soon most imposingly dressed in trousers, vest, and swallow-tailed coat. Next day, the inventor went to inspect his handiwork, when the pirate was luxuriously perched on the bogle's head!

Should salmon-breeding fully succeed, it will no doubt be adopted in all our first-class salmon-rivers. To stock a stream originally destitute of this fish, would be a signal triumph; and some people are even sanguine enough to attempt it. I rather think they are expecting too much, and that—like the effort of my patriotic grandfather, the late Sir John Sinclair, to enliven the Caithness moors with nightingale music—after the first migration the fish will come back no more to a stream which their previous neglect showed to be unsuitable to their habits. Sir John's plan was excellent, *had it only succeeded.* He employed London bird-fanciers to procure nightingale eggs, and Caithness shepherds to find the nests of the equally soft-billed robin-redbreast. The London eggs soon displaced the Caithness ones, and robin carefully hatched and reared the embryo melodists. In summer, numbers of young nightingales were seen about the bushes, but at the autumn migration they disappeared, never to return.

Before the Tay spawning-boxes had so thoroughly proved the identity of the parr and salmon, I shut up three parr in a spring-well in July. The summer following, two were alive, of a dark-green shade. Next April, when they cleaned out the well, only one fish remained. The parr marks were still apparent, but it had grown much bigger, was large-headed, and very dark in colour. This last also disappeared soon after. Unlike burn-trout, which soon become quite familiar, and eat greedily any food thrown to them, these parr generally hid at the bottom of the spring, and were very shy.

The following make-shift is inserted for the benefit of the luckless wight who may have the misfortune to break the top of his rod at the water-side, and neglected to bring a spare one. On the morning of my last day's fishing of the Echaig, I hooked a four-pound sea-trout on my bob, and when the fish was quite spent, the trail-fly fastened on a rotten stump. I waded in to try to disengage it, and in so doing, carelessly strained back my rod over my right shoulder. The fish gave a languid plunge, and of course broke the top. Although I had only some thread and a pair of scissors, I cut a couple of twigs and spliced my rod, as clumsily as ever a country surgeon bungled a poor man's leg. With my maimed instrument I killed two fine salmon and several sea-trout. I had fished since July, and bagged two hundred and fifty-seven sea-trout, many very large, and twelve salmon and grilse, with the same top, and little expected to break it the last day, when I was particularly anxious to do great things. A few years ago, the same mishap befell me when fishing in Loch Drunkie. At the beginning of the day, a large yellow trout rose, and was fixed, just under a perpendicular bank. Not being able to land the fish without throwing back my rod too far, I snapped the top, though I secured my prey. Nothing daunted, I mended my rod with a bit of twine, and killed five more fine trout. I question if, either day, I should have had better sport had no accident occurred.

AUTUMN ANGLING ON THE LYON.

When tenant of the shootings of Garth, in Perthshire, in the summer of 1858, I had obtained leave, through the interest of my kind landlord with the liberal proprietor, to fish salmon over nearly the whole of the river Lyon. The privilege, so freely accorded, was no common boon; for in addition to the high rate at which salmon-angling is now held, this river flowed through a singularly picturesque district of oak-wood, moorland, and mountain; while the well-separated and finely-defined pools gave ample scope for a full and powerful cast.

As comparatively few of the larger fish ascended the higher waters of the Lyon, I seldom wandered above the heavy streams, where the best salmon, when in the river, were sure to lodge. The upper stretch was, however, to many, the more tempting half; for in addition to the romantic scenery, each good pool or stream teemed with keen and lively grilse.

Garth House was about six miles from the nearest upper salmon-pool of the beat. The remaining ones, at longer or shorter distances from each other, extended some miles higher. After them, a stretch of very moderate water ended in the fine grilse-casts above Meggernie Bridge.

When the days were long and fine, the walk along the Lyon's banks and braes was wonderfully pleasant; but towards the " hint o' hairst," as the weather began to break and the light early to fail, a small spring-cart and pony, hired from the "general merchant," added much to the comfort, and, by saving time, even to the success of a salmon day.

Tommy, the pony, a fat strawberry dumple, and his driver, a stout lad of fourteen, had a perfect sympathy with each other's feelings and failings. Both were squat, good-tempered, selfish, shrewd in economising trouble, and pre-eminently lazy. To do Danie justice, he was a sagacious monkey, his intense love of country gossip having even a slight smack of the antiquary; and in truth, the drive up Glenlyon afforded a fair field for his imagination and memory. From the gushing waterfall on Chesthill Brae, with its mouldering brig, the ruinous tower of Carnibarn, the old Popish kirkyard, the eleven elm-trees,—called, if I remember rightly, "The Daughters of Glenlyon," and which formerly did duty as milestones,—to the fat farmer, within a trifle of 7 feet, whose weight turned a beam of 30 stone, Danie had always subjects for our admiration—or wonder!

Three weeks of warm July days had dwindled the Lyon to a thread when I saw it first, and on asking a resident on its banks his opinion of its angling capabilities, I received the following *very* encouraging reply: "Oh! you mustn't expect to do great things; but if it comes a fresh, there's *one* pool where you *might* get a fish, if you were getting up at two o'clock in the morning." Pleasant prospects!

An almost uninterrupted succession of dry sunny weather still kept down the river until the Lammas floods. When the water was slightly swelled by a few refreshing showers, only some of the deeper pools came into low trim, quickly falling back again to their thin clear state. The Garth keeper, however, being well acquainted with the upper water, and also having a good idea both of the size and colour of the salmon-flies, no time was lost, when the clouds now and then grudgingly favoured us with their driblets. Long before they were needed, I had tied, by the light of the glorious July sun, every variety of summer and autumn salmon-fly that the river in its most exacting state could demand.

A previous day and night of rain brought the keeper at the end of the month to say there was "plenty water." On running down to the river-side, it was too thick and "drumly" for fly, and an old roadman volunteered the advice that "she was ower big for fishing." Better too big than too small, thought I; so the casts for to-morrow were carefully arranged, with rod, gaff, and bag ready at a moment's notice.

Next morning we were off for the high pools at eight o'clock, in spite of a hazy atmosphere and drizzling rain. While plodding past the first clachan, a shoemaker said something in Gaelic to a knot of gossips around him, "What's that, Mac?" "He jist says, sir, we may turn aboot hame, for ye might as weel throw a flee on the hee-road as on the Lyon the day."

I am afraid this well-meant hint did not produce the effect intended, but very much the contrary. Our only reception of the prophecy was to march defiantly up the brae.

The first pool, a long and likely one, I swept over with great caution. Few anglers, indeed, begin to fish carelessly; but it is the test of a skilled hand that his patience and wariness never fail, and so he is never taken by surprise at the sudden bolt of a royal fish. Genuine and spurious anglers may readily be distinguished by the calmness and temper of the former in working a difficult river, where fish are scarce and hard to move; while the latter soon lose heart, and before the day is half over fairly give in. Fishers of this last stamp may be keen enough when fish are numerous, and on the rise; but it is only the gifted few who, after a long and barren day, will deliver their first and final casts with equal vigour and precision.

Not a fin stirred in this promising bit of water to my crow-wing fly, neither did a dark mottled turkey-feather prove more alluring. A white trout, however, rose in the pool above. Mac, who was apt to be sanguine, affirmed it was a grilse; but we could not decide the point, as it refused to show again.

The next two casts were my special favourites. They are considerably apart: one flowing close to the road, is deep, confined, and eddying; the other, half a mile upward, gave scope for one of those splendid sweeps of the line which is the delight of the salmon-angler's heart. But, alas! changes of dark flies did not even excite a contemptuous "bell-up." The lighter lures of grey turkey-wing and brown hackle, and argus-wing with red hackle, only fixed three yellow trout about half a pound each, which, instead of being welcomed, did but disgust me with light flies for the rest of the day.

I had now carefully searched every pool and stream to the top of the beat, without one break of a salmon. There remained only time to skim over a few pet casts on the return —our last chance of cheating the brogue-maker's spell. The free upward pool, where the yellow trout were so officious, had been twice tried with varied lure. It had scarcely rested an hour, still I could not resist a third attempt with the crow-wing. At the throat of the stream, where I had so shortly before taken especial pains with this same fly, up came the salmon, sucked down the hook, and was firm and fast. It made a fine run, and when landed was nearly ten pounds, and clear as silver.

The homeward water was tried with equal pains and change of fly, but there was not another offer all day. In passing the cottages, the shoemaker prophet of evil met us on the road with "Whaur's the salmon?" in English. Mac, who espied him at a distance, had slyly slung the bag out of sight. He replied with a grin, "In the bag," and nodded over his shoulder. "So ye hae," was the rejoinder; "atweel, I wudna hae thocht."

In some rivers, such as Spey, where salmon are constantly moving, the second fisher has nearly as good a chance as the first, and a man may often hook a salmon in a pool which shortly before he had drawn blank. Such rivers, however, are rather the exception than the rule, and in by far the greater number of salmon-streams, after the water has been searched by an able angler, his successor's prospects are considerably blighted. On my next fishing-day, however, I had the satisfaction of picking up the worm from before the very beak of a "two o'clock in the morning" bird.

A close and sultry air made the whole *genus salmo* quite as stubborn as on my first introduction to the Lyon; and although I swept the water leisurely up to the stream where I killed the salmon a few days before, the only offers were the splash of a playful grilse, which declined to continue the game, and the fix of a really good river-trout which slipped off.

On reaching the bank of my fortunate pool, the sun opportunely glanced on the brass reel belonging to an uncouth rod, evidently hid in a hurry among the rank grass. A pair of hobnail boots peeping out from under "the busses," as Mac calls the whins, quickly revealed the owner of the rod, and we unkennelled the comical old "bellman," who shammed a nap to perfection. He had been out since the dawn, he said, but "hadna steered a fin or seen a fish a' day." To punish old Slyboots, a fine salmon floundered up at this moment before us, as if to give him the lie direct. The confusion on "Belltow's" face and the smirk on Mac's were rare fun. He saw at once that the old man had not only seen this fish, but (as we afterwards were told by the Meggernie keeper was fact) had most likely thrown over it, and was "waiting on" for another trial when he heard our approach. His tactics, then, were to hide himself; and if found out, to feign sleep, but at all events to conceal from us that there was a *feeding salmon* in the pool.

Taking post about twenty yards above the fish, I threw cautiously over him with my dark fly, and at the first free sweep he sprang beautifully and fastened. He first struck across the stream, and then made some fine bursts up and down the pool before I could tire him. In the thick of it I heard the old man's "Gie't line! gie't line!" to which, of course, I paid no respect, Mac vainly trying to keep him quiet. When gaffed, this salmon proved a twelve pounder, and fresh from the sea.

The bellman had no less than three flies on his cast, only about a foot apart! But even had they been well separated, or fished with singly, none of them, I am convinced, would have had much chance of hooking a Lyon salmon.

The hot day and hard work made a draught from the spring at the nearest farmhouse very delicious; and the luxury of "a drink" is enhanced by sucking it through our *patent* drinking-horn—the hollow bone of a roe's fore-leg.

Sunning himself close to the spring, a stone-blind man was making pirn-lines in the most dexterous manner I ever saw. He also had a little workshop, and coopered pails, "bowies," &c., remarkably well. I bought a trout-line from him as a curiosity, and a neat "cogue" to water the pony with from the roadside burns. This blind man supports himself in comfort even in a lonely Highland glen.

The last fishing-day with Mac was unfortunate. At the tail of the first pool, hitherto a barren one, I hooked a salmon. It was lost entirely by Mac missing his first gaff, and being too nervous to take advantage of a second chance, after which the fish broke its hold. I had four more rises in different pools, but no fastens, although I spared neither time nor change of lure to effect one. A fine sky and good water, but fish rose shyly, and only nipped at the fly.

August was nearly ended, the weather settling again after the floods, and river getting small. From the scanty water there were only two pools I had much trust in, so I paid them a stately visit in the "general merchant's" equipage. In one of these pools I sprang a fish five times, fixing him at the fifth offer, and losing him from being tenderly hooked. In the other I killed a small fish of six pounds, but very clean and handsome.

After a tract of fine harvest-days the skies overcast, and weather broke into continued heavy rain. The first fair morning I rode up the glen alone on the lazy strawberry cob, and found the water in good large ply. I had scarcely wetted my line before the clouds gathered, and poured down their bucketfuls. The river soon began to wax, which of course kept down the fish, although I tried the best casts with large and likely flies.

Expecting a friend to dinner, and time being nearly "up," I was giving a closing sweep to the tail of the "road pool" before trotting home, when at this *mal-apropos* moment a splendid salmon hooked! The casting-line being only fine single gut, the first touch of my fish proved that, to land him, he must be worked for with patience and caution. From the roughness and steepness of the bank, the safest although most tedious course was, if possible, to prevent the monster from leaving the pool. As he proved "a sulker," there was little difficulty in detaining him, but his phlegmatic temper was such a stress on mine as sorely to tempt me to risk my vantage-ground in the fight, when two farm-hinds who had been watching from a distance walked deliberately down to the opposite bank, and set themselves doggedly to see it out. All thoughts of hurrying the salmon, at the risk of the light tackle, were now given up. My friend might be hungry and the dinner spoiled, but the gaping clodpoles should never see me break my fish.

After nearly two hours' wary work, the victim became so weak and docile as to allow itself to be guided to the bank. The sight of the white gravel, however, always roused its ebbing energies to dart again into the deep. At every dash away from the shore, the laugh of the onlookers was hearty and undisguised, until at last I shut them up by stranding a beautifully-shaped sixteen-pound salmon on the sloping shingle.

My ride home would have been lengthy, had I not applied the only incentive to diligence Tommy respected—viz., a sharp spur. His master used to boast that he never tired or fell off in condition. This panegyric always reminded me of a lazy "minister's man" whose master had turned him off for this fault alone. The minister (who assured me "he would not tell a fib for all the world"), having occasion to be from home the week before the term, knew that his factotum would do literally nothing when he was absent, unless he bribed him with a good character. He therefore wrote in large text the words, "Sober, honest," &c., and wound up by "he gives sure evidence of being a very durable servant"—double-dashing the last three words. The "man" was delighted with his certificate, particularly the compliment at the end, promised to do all justice to the glebe till his master's return, and kept his word.

My friend met me at the door of Garth House, accepted the fish as sufficient apology for my late return, admired it to my heart's content, and expressed his determination (as he had never seen a salmon landed) to accompany me on the next fishing-day.

On the 13th of September the spring-cart was early at the door. Including charioteer Danie, we were a party of five, to Strawberry Dumple's intense disgust, who firmly held with the doctor, when ordered to swallow a box of his own pills, that "one of us was a dose" up Glenlyon brae. He evidently seemed to think our unwonted weight a bitter pill; and both he and his master tacitly agreed to walk all the way, unless when we coaxed them into a shambling amble now and then *down-hill.*

As our friend wore thin shoes, and the walk from the cart to the first pool was damp, we agreed that I should try it alone, and the party drive on and wait for me at the "road pool," about a quarter of a mile farther forward. Hitherto, I had been unfortunate in this pool, having lost the only fish I ever moved in it. This time, however, a heavy salmon rushed up at the tail of the stream and hooked firm. He made a noble spurt to begin—then bored up rapids—struck across river—sulked, and played all his tricks and vagaries. After an hour's severe play, he managed, in spite of me, to roll over the waterfall into the pool below. Still through this danger I kept him safe, and was in the very act of raising his unresisting head on the gravel when his well-worn hold parted! With a languid plunge he vanished amid the foam, and I rejoined my companions with a malediction on that "unchancy" pool.

The account of my mishap whetted our guest's appetite to witness the mysteries of a salmon-run. Each stream and pool to the top of the beat was, however, a failure, not even the excitement of a rise rewarding my labour and his patient watching. On the return I could evidently see that my friend's interest in the sport was gone, and his attention had quite flagged. A graceful bend of the river, or sudden rise of the opposite hill—the white clusters of the hazel or coral berries of the rowan-tree — each in turn had far greater attraction for the contemplative man than perpetual lashing for salmon, who treated all our overtures with silent contempt.

For the second time we pulled up at my favourite "road pool," but a prolific hazel copse had tempted all our party under its shade, save one who held my gaff. At the very top of the eddy, and to the first throw, up bolted a salmon. It made some fine rushes, then suddenly tamed, and was easily "clipped." A small clear fish of seven pounds. A short tract of dry weather again lowered the Lyon. Before another "fresh" our friend had left us, and to this day has never had the satisfaction of "being in at the death" of a salmon.

Close-time of this season seemed to have been considerably anticipated by settled dry weather. For the last few days that remained, rain appeared hopeless in the face of a high barometer. I had contentedly put up my fishing-gear till next year, when a sudden and unexpected drenching rain caused a fine flow of the river. Danie and I were of course off betimes for the high water, and the "unchancy" pool surrendered a first victim. It was only six pounds, but being body-hooked, made as sporting a run as many a fish triple its weight. Rose another in the "road pool," which declined to move a second time, and then drove to the long free stream below the blind man's house. On remarking to Danie that our line-making machine was absent from his "settle" at the gable of the house, he naively answered, "I see'd him *looking* oot o' his window."

The long stream is delightful fishing, pleasant even when one does not see a fish. On this fine angling day I cautiously tried the confined current at its top, and carefully raked the swirling eddies of the opposite bank, but it was not until the broadening waters at its close demanded the full pitch of an angler's powers that a beautiful salmon sprang. When fixed, he rolled round and round on the surface, lashing the water with his tail. After he got down I wondered at the want of energy and pluck in so good a fish, for before ten minutes' play he came sweetly to bank on his broadside. Danie held the gaff, and in his eagerness ran down to the salmon. "Now, take time," quoth I, "and clip him true the first trial." Judge my horror when the urchin seized the instrument in both hands, and came down upon the salmon's body as if he meant to fell an ox! Of course the fish sweltered into the stream again, and the wonder was that Danie's savage onslaught had not snapped the line. Soon, however, the monster came floating in sideways again, when, disarming my ally of his weapon, I gaffed it myself. The monkey came grinning up, without apology or shame, shouting merrily, "I never see'd the like o' that afore." The fish weighed thirteen pounds, and was so quickly overcome from having, in the first struggle, twisted the gut round its gills, and thus drowned itself.

My last two angling-days of the Lyon having now really come, I determined, by being early at the lowest pool, to make the most of them. I was forestalled, however; and a precautionary survey disclosed a brother of the craft, who had come to grief by breaking his line. He was seated mending his tackle, totally unconscious of my discovery, and most likely before he was set up again his rival was out of sight with a clear lead of the water. But this sharp practice availed little, for not a fish showed until I got to the stream above "the wooden brig," the highest cast of our salmon-beat. There I moved a dark old fish three times. He began by a free dash at my black fly, then refused. Rested him some time, and tried him with a lighter; but only a head appeared this time. Another rest, and refusal of same fly, so gave him a brighter lure still. This last was only noticed by a sluggish "bell." Waited some time, changing flies and resting; but when salmon spring briskly at first, and become duller each succeeding rise, they are very apt, as in the present instance, finally to refuse altogether. When, on the contrary, the first rise is lazy, and the second more active, look sharp for the third offer, and take it coolly. The spin of the pirn-line will most likely prove its pleasing sequel!

On the return, not even a white trout stirred until I regained the low pool, which my alert Waltonian brother had already skimmed. A sly peep at an angler in difficulties, however, has generally an effect on his successor to the pool the very reverse of a damper. Heedfully, therefore, the rough sharp stream was fished down till it deepened and steadied, when a heavy fish followed the fly with one of those sweeping rolls deemed by many knowing anglers a hint that in their case rest-time between the casts is superfluous ceremony. Instantly clapping the fly again before the salmon's nose, a furious rush and tightened line proved that I had read him right. He never sulked nor parleyed, but fought bravely on, doing his best to break his chain. A game customer like this is soon subdued, and in less than twenty minutes a 12½-lb. harvest-fish lay gasping on the grass. During the struggle I twice saw its paired neighbour feeding in mid-stream; and whenever I had cut the hook from the dead fish's jaw, I offered it to the lively relict in the pool. It came at once, but hooked so tenderly that one dash parted the slight catch.

Although I did not land a fish, the final day of the Lyon has left as pleasing reminiscences as any of its predecessors. A balmy morning and dry road tempted me to steal "cannily" up the glen on foot, more to enjoy a peaceful farewell of the now familiar river, than with much hope of hooking a fish in water so thin and clear.

When I sauntered down to the first pool, I found Chesthill's fisherman giving it the finishing touches; and he told me that another well-known Lyon angler had had "his wull o't" shortly before, but nothing had moved to either of them. The tiny state of the river was warrant enough for "ill luck," and I had turned away to seek some of the deeper linns which might not have been already raked, when the man begged me to try this pool once more. "Three times was canny," and although they had "dune naething, he would like weel to see't cuisten ower by me."

To please him, I put on my lightest tackle and threw right across to the farther side with a long and even sweep. Near the tail of the pool the heaviest water runs close to the opposite bank. This was the critical bit, as both the fisherman and I knew full well. To fish it properly required a most powerful throw; and yet, from the still, clear state of the water, the fly ought to fall like gossamer. At the second attempt of this difficult cast, a large red-tinged salmon fearlessly came and hooked. Quickly shortening the line by getting opposite his head, I thought I had my captive safe, when he suddenly vaulted a foot clear of the river and shook himself free. A spectator and witness *is* a comfort when a heavy fish *breaks its hold*, perhaps not when it breaks the casting-line!

Moved two more salmon in the long pool below the blind man's house, and touched one of them sharply at second rise, but his neighbour refused to come again. Nevertheless, from the scanty water and bright sky, I had reason to be satisfied that any fish deigned to notice my fly on the last Lyon day of 1858.

Perfect contentment with a few salmon-rises and an empty fishing-bag, by way of *finale* to an angling season, can hardly fail to suggest " the glorious nibble " of a brother enthusiast. Moving large fish, however, is held by every true angler only second to hooking them; but many persons are apt to despise the most skilful and patient efforts unless crowned with immediate success, and to such the plaintive wail of an old craftsman, when asked what he had caught, may suggest no unworthy moral—" *Nothing but twigs!* "

A salmon-fisher is deemed by those who watch him, as the river statue of patience. But making allowance for the different tempers of men, the fisherman's patience is generally in fair proportion to his knowledge of the sport and practical skill. These qualities are needed to ensure self-reliance, without which, patience in the art of angling would be only foolish endurance.

The general rules for salmon-fishing apply to all rivers, as they are much the same with regard to flies, the best moods of the water and times of day for angling, on the top, in the middle, or at the bottom—viz., with fly, minnow, or worm. Almost every river has, however, some peculiarities taken advantage of by the local fishers, but which every able wielder of the rod, especially if he has a fair amount of general practice, will quickly master. This is fishing knowledge, and only to be learned by long and keen observation. An active young man of good hand and quick eye, with some enthusiasm, will soon be taught dexterity, which consists in the power of commanding any water, whether by casting a very long line, or, in difficult streams, by pitching the fly between every small opening among trees, scarcely ever catching a twig—at other times throwing it clear of the overhanging rocks with such unerring aim as rarely to break a hook.

Any one having both fishing knowledge and manual skill (for some reputed good anglers possess only one of these gifts), is seldom tried in his patience, because he is able to make use of his fishing time, not wasting it on the water as inexperienced anglers are apt to do, when success is more than doubtful. Of course, there are many men of little leisure, who generally need the services of some local "regular," to whose guidance they trust implicitly. Such fishers are not likely to gain self-confidence, or ever to become scientific craftsmen.

A salmon-fisher, to be self-reliant, ought to require no more than to know the February flies of any river he means to fish from the first to the last of a season. He will know how to change both size and colours of fly to suit not only the varying moods of the water, but also the advancing year. Upon comparing the enormous hook of the opening month with the tiny fly required for the clear water of June or July, such fishing prescience may appear marvellous to the uninitiated; but, like other changes, it has been so gradual, that the fisher himself scarcely perceives how it came about. Had he dropped his rod for a couple of months, he might have had difficulty in picking up the fly again, and most likely, to save time, would have resorted to one of the fishermen of the district for a fresh start. I speak from experience; for having rented five miles of northern Dee for three years—as difficult a river to fish as any in Scotland—I never required more than to know the opening fly of the season, or when I came later, the fly then in use. In 1855, without any other advice or assistance than this, I landed fifty-five salmon from the 6th of March till the 15th of May, but then I had a splendid assortment of feathers and tackle, and tied flies to suit myself every morning.

OCTOBER ON THE STINCHAR.

THE October floods of the Stinchar come pretty regularly, sometimes allowing the river to empty itself between the large "spates." When unbroken, heavy water lasts without intermission, the fish are so much knocked about that they become dull and languid, until they have been given a rest by the lowering of the river. Our first flood, about the 10th of the month, was from "bank to brae," and the pools were not in fishing order until the afternoon of the second day. The river was even then in far too tumultuous a state to suit my taste; but my second son rose a salmon twice, with a large showy fly, in the "slack water" of our mid-pool, named the "Scaur."

This "Wheel," as it is called, is rather confined, but very deep, and when the river is large, shelves off on either side into shallow eddies, very alluring to fish when the force of the current prevents their keeping the main stream. No variety, in either size or colour, could tempt this salmon to show himself again, and not another fin would stir in any other part of our water.

On the next morning, before breakfast, the same rod rose the fish of the previous day; and the river having lowered in some measure by noon, I took my rod, giving him two changes of fly, without success. As a last resource, I gave him the "wind over" which induced him to give a fine deliberate roll from the bank between the deep and shallow water. The fish was, however, again stubborn, and my only other rise was a sea-trout, attracted by my salmon-fly in the still water of "Dub-a-nee," our highest and choicest pool, which I landed.

At daybreak my son again found his way to the Scaur, when his fish came up so keenly that he felt certain of a "fix" next time. He was only 8½ lb. weight, but proved a fine clean salmon, having made spirited play for fifteen minutes. This was counted our first fish of the season, for we agree with the Fishing Guide of the Tweed, in his distinction of terms. On an Englishman's landing what he called a "fish" on the bank, the old man gave it a contemptuous kick—muttering, "Ye dunna ken a bit gilsh whan ye see ane afore ye."

More rain fell, and the water rose high again. As usual, my son was at the bank of the river by daylight. In Dub-a-nee he hooked at the first offer another clean salmon of 9 lb., and late in the day its facsimile. The first was easily landed; but the fish of the evening made several strange gambols, ending by boring round a tree, surrounded by an eddy, on the opposite bank. This fish would have been lost, without a doubt, if a spectator had not been able to untwist and set it free. An old farmer wandered down from his turnip-field, was satisfied the angler had caught only a branch, and asking no questions, quietly returned to his work. The next day, on being "chaffed" for his want of interest in the sport, he retorted in his Ayrshire *patois*, "I thocht it was the tree ye had cotched."

The first rain brought chiefly small fish, but the giants were not long in following. October was now advancing, and the first night-frost whitened the ground after a day of heavy showers. Although the pools were in capital order, the night-rime effectually prevented the fish, before breakfast, from rising to the most tempting changes of fly. About noon, however, when the sun was warmest, a light breeze and fleecy clouds gave promise of a favourable day.

We divided the water, my son taking the low pools, named the "Duckat Wheel" and the "Bridge Wheel," while the Scaur and Dub-a-nee, the higher ones, fell to my share. As the Scaur was well sheltered from the noontide sun, I was anxious to go over Dub-a-nee, in order to take advantage of the clouds floating lightly in the sky, fitfully shading his beams. Unlike my usual custom in autumn, I began with a large hook, orange, yellow, and black body, having a fine mottled, dark turkey wing. About twenty minutes are needed to fish Dub-a-nee properly; and, after the last cast had been made, of course it disappointed me that no fish had deigned even to notice my lure.

Sitting down on the bank, I chose out of my fly-book a much smaller hook, composed of a claret and purple body, and red turkey wing. With this enticing fly, all the well-known eddies and sunk rocks were carefully searched, bringing me to the calm water at the foot of the pool. The whole of Dub-a-nee needs a long throw, but its broad shallow requires the full pitch of an expert hand.

I had cast within a yard of the opposite bank, bringing the fly round to the gravel on the near side, when a splash broke the still water, and the head and shoulders of an enormous fish tightening the line made my heart beat. To shorten my line and get opposite his head was the work of a moment. The salmon, however, seemed quite disposed to give "fair play," for it only leaned its ponderous weight against the single gut, and steered steadily into the stream. My wish now was to coax him up the pool; for at the foot, only fifty yards from the place where he was hooked, was one of the most dangerous bits of water in the whole fishing beat. Slowly and with much trouble I gained yard after yard of the up-stream until nearly opposite the tree which had so troubled my son.

Having now a good stretch of clear water below, I ventured to turn his head, but he quickly resented the liberty, by dashing down with tremendous speed, requiring all my efforts to appease him before he reached the dangerous ground which had wrecked the hopes of many a fisherman. I was again obliged to resort to the slow process of wearing up the river; but although the fish had been hooked for an hour and a half, he was as fresh as when he took the fly. A step behind was the river-watcher, in his easiest attitude, determined to see the game played out. A bluff honest fellow, of few words, he did not speak or trouble me till he was addressed, when he brought cheering news of my companion below. "The young gentleman landed, a short time since, a beautiful clean fish in the Duckat Wheel," quoth he, encouragingly.

An hour more, and my son, attended by the game-watcher "Sandy," and a young river-prowler, from Colmonell, joined our company. A few minutes' rest was then given me, when my son took the rod; but even with this respite my arm was rather stiff after four hours' play of so heavy a salmon.

"That's the largest fish I have seen on a rod for several years," remarked the watcher, taking a keen interest in the proceedings.

My son proposed stoning him, which advice was eagerly seconded by the Colmonell water-spirit. The watcher did not approve of this measure, however, and my consent was reluctantly given. The fish had never fairly sulked, and I always found it possible to move him at will, so that patience only was needed until he was so far subdued as to be safely turned down stream, and led past the rocks and sunk stumps of trees on the far side.

Large stones were now flung thickly at our victim, the game-watcher joining in the exciting "bicker." The fish, maddened by his persecution, started, winced, and then struck for the opposite shore, down which he darted with the speed of an arrow. No line could then curb him from the treacherous rocks; and getting on the far side of one, close to the gravel there, a foot above the surface, a scrape on its edge cut the line!

But for this insulting treatment, my huge salmon would have preserved good manners all through his trying ordeal, and merited the full compliment, only partially bestowed by a Celtic gillie on a Laggan fish, " She's playin' ceevil *noo !* "

The Colmonell "kelpie" was off in a twinkling, but the rest of the party remained to talk over the mishap. The game-watcher thought, from the length and strength of his play, that the fish must have been hooked by the body. He had never seen him clear of the water, though; and the river-guardian, who had twice watched a clean leap from the surface, was of a different opinion, maintaining that he distinctly perceived this splendid salmon was fairly fixed by the mouth. The sequel will show that in all likelihood he was correct.

A fine dry night reduced the river to the smallest trim possible for fishing. The chief prospect of success, therefore, lay in trying an early cast, when my son hooked the only salmon he rose in the pool of Dub-a-nee, and in five minutes he was stranded on the shelving shingle. The fish was beautifully shaped, although his time in the fresh water had slightly tinged his colour with yellow. He rushed heedlessly round the pool with the furious folly of a Thames chub, and was, in consequence, tired out so easily.

Rain fell in ceaseless torrents until the following day at noon, when the clouds broke and the sun shone out gloriously. Of course, a tremendous flood followed, which prevented fly-fishing for twenty-four hours. Even after that time, there was so great a rush of madder-brown-coloured water, that I chose for my son's line a large, rather bright spring-fly. Three feeding salmon appeared at intervals in Dub-a-nee—two seemed about 12 lb., and one in the far eddy we estimated at about 20 lb. in weight. The two lesser fish would not notice the lure; but the moment the long sweep reached the eddy, the large salmon sprang up beautifully and "fastened."

To play such a fish was the very luxury of angling. He neither sulked nor spurted, but did his best to escape in fair battle, and in half an hour was safe on the bank, the angler having steadily refused Sandy's eager request to strike him with the gaff. He was a fine broad fish of 21 lb. One more sluggish " break " in the evening was all that followed, and the water being so large and muddy from the discharge of the moss-burns, I was contented with the humble post of spectator.

There were now only three days remaining of the rod-fishing on the Stinchar for 1870—though, happily, the river was still in flood.

A striking instance of the uncertainty of salmon-flies occurred during our last, and indeed our only fortnight of good fishing for the season. A fly of the previous year (1869), called " death," from its many captures when all others failed, hardly even rose a fish to us, and certainly did not kill one. Our most successful lure, hitherto, has been described already; but it seemed to me possible to improve it by enlarging the hook, and substituting a wing from the common kite's tail. This feather has a brighter and more delicate lustre in clear water, and is better seen even when the river is large or turbid.

The kite is now so rare that few fishing-tackle shops can boast of having this tempting feather, and the makers fill its place generally from the turkey, which makes an excellent, though not a better substitute, as they often allege. Many years ago I was given a full tail of the kite by my old sporting friend, Peter Robertson of the Black Mount, who always gave his best aids in my shooting and fishing expeditions. Times are changed since I can remember three kites' nests—one in an oak-tree on the lawn, and the others within a mile of my father's Highland home, while these ornamental birds are now almost banished from the mountains of Scotland.

The river was too full and muddy till noon, so I had time to dress four flies, two rather large, and the others a size less. We then set out for the afternoon and evening fishing, I using all the time one of my own imitations, while my son chose a stereotyped Stinchar hook, making several changes when the fish refused to notice his lure. Two small salmon moved to my fly in the pool of Dub-a-nee, and two good ones in the Scaur, the last all but hooking, as I struck sharply and turned him on his side. During all this time my neighbour rod did not incite a single offer.

Showers in the night kept the river in the same trim as the previous day, so my son was given the chance of the gled's tail *versus* the turkey-cock's! We divided Dub-a-nee fairly, and had each cast over more than half of our water when my companion called out that he had raised a splendid salmon. Of course he passed down ten yards without disturbing him further, and then fished blank to the end of the pool. Having failed to move anything with showy colours, I chose the small sombre fly which had already done good service for my rod, while my comrade was to follow with the same hook which had started the fish. While making these arrangements, the river-watcher walked past, but without waiting to see the result, as we meant to give the salmon a long rest.

After sitting about an hour on the bank, I went carefully over the high part of the pool, sweeping my fly above the huge fish with most attractive jerks. No notice, however, was taken of them, so the first temptation was again offered by my neighbour rod, in the shape of the gled's tail. There was no shyness this time, for with the greediness of a shark he seized the hook, and both of us were instantly opposite the struggling monster. With the exception of a spirited rush at intervals, ending always in a dangerous shake or savage vault, the play was fair and even. Striking first up, and then across the stream, this strong and active salmon allowed himself to be turned whenever we approached difficult water, and began soon to hoist " signals of distress."

The angler had twice brought his victim within reach of Sandy's extended gaff, which he had hardly evaded by a languid sweep of the tail, when the watcher again hove in sight at " double quick " time, having caught a glimpse of the fight from a neighbouring knoll. However, he barely got "in at the death," for the fish made one more feeble effort to keep under water, and then floated to the bank, an unresisting mark for Sandy's "clip." His weight was 23 lb., and the time taken from hooking till landing was three-quarters of an hour.

It was now the 31st of October, the last day of the season, and every angler with either right or leave to fish on any part of the river, was of course at his post. The water was low, but as the ground had been well saturated with the previous rains, there was hope of its keeping in fishing trim till the evening.

My eldest son had made an effort, by travelling all night, to have one day on the Stinchar; but by every exertion he only arrived in time for luncheon, his portmanteau and fishing-gear following. He had, however, carried his salmon-rod himself; so, after choosing one of my large reels, he joined us about two o'clock at the Duckat Wheel, our nearest pool. Dub-a-nee had been unsuccessfully fished after breakfast, so we advised him not to try again till four o'clock, when it would be free from sunshine.

Early in the day my second son had raised a large fish close under the bridge, and another about the same size moved to my rod in the Scaur. Each of them was tempted by the gled's tail, and both were touched. The Bridge Wheel fisherman had, however, broken his hook by contact with the stones; so, as the salmon could not have been pricked with the blunted weapon, he was booked for an evening trial. The right of the top part of this wheel *below* the bridge fell to my share, and the lower half to a neighbouring farmer, but the fish rose exactly on our march. On the crest of the bridge were some officious onlookers, who ran at once to apprise the farmer of a feeding fish; when he hastened down with his rod, hooked, and lost the salmon by too great confidence in double gut and rough usage. So our only hope, faint though it was, rested in Dub-a-nee after sunset.

The water was growing very low and clear, when my eldest son threw his first cast with the small turkey wing, the least glaring fly in our collection. At the same confined swirl of the current, a dull wave under the hook gave token of the prize which lay below. A long rest followed; then a cast, light as thistle-down, allured the wary insect-watcher to repeat his effort, with the evident resolve to dally no longer with his prey. Immediately, a vindictive plunge revealed both his power and will to use it, by breaking free from so fragile a chain. To my dismay, I now saw that my son had chosen, by mistake, the lightest reel-line in my possession, only intended for sea-trout or grilse, in the clearest water of July! Its length, however, was 100 yards; and having perfect confidence in the skill of the fisherman, I resolved not to flurry him with a warning, but to wait in patience until the prize was either lost or won.

The fish neither dashed round the pool in terror, nor refused to move in sullen indifference, but with a degree of calm dignity steered along the opposite bank, giving fitfully a revengeful toss which made my heart flutter. Higher, higher, he rowed himself, till he arrived within a few yards of the overhanging trees. If he resolved to pass this barrier, I knew well the alternative was a broken line for the angler, or a jump to the shoulders in the rapid current. At this crisis the fish was turned by wary coaxing, and brought cautiously down to the deep water where he had been hooked. A new danger was here threatened, for the eddy tree appeared provokingly near, and it was likely the huge fish might strike across the river, twisting the line around its branches. Again he was foiled by the coolness of his tormentor, and the upstream march was resumed.

The shades of evening now deepened, and my hopes of a daylight capture were over. The sky was, however, cloudless; not a breath stirred the leaves, and, to our delight, the glorious red harvest moon rose "broad" over the brow of the

Ayrshire hills. We shall have him yet if we wait till midnight, thought I, as villager after villager rushed down from Colmonell to see the game played out. Being the only one of the group who knew the slender bond which united the fisherman with his fish, I watched the struggle with greater anxiety than any present, not excepting the angler himself.

Hour after hour passed away, but "Macfarlane's lamp" was bright in the sky, shedding full light on the river for the working of the salmon. It was nearly ten o'clock at night before the noble fellow began to show symptoms of yielding. "Bring a lantern, Sandy, as he can never be gaffed by moonlight." Sandy was soon ready and eager with light and steel. The salmon, however, though nearly spent, refused to come within reach of his weapon, and kept lashing the water into foam on the opposite shore. Quick as thought, Sandy dashed across the black stream and reached the fish before he sank. Then poising the lantern for a second, up to his waist in the water, he struck his victim with deadly determination—a pause ensued—the light hissed in the river, and was extinguished. Then followed a severe unseen struggle under the darkened bank, when Sandy, with a grip like a bull-dog, dripping from head to foot, crawled from the deep, shouting, "I ha'e him noo!"

The confident predictions that he was body-hooked, hazarded by the spectators on account of his strong play, were soon falsified, for he was found to be beautifully fixed by the tongue. His weight was nearly 25 lb., proving the finest fish of the season landed by the rod on the Stinchar. Thus to find he was right, was a triumph to the river-watcher, who had always firmly maintained that my previous monster had been hooked by the mouth.

The latter, and another of much smaller size, were all which were lost to our rods after being hooked during 1871. Reports reached us every fishing day, however, both up and down the river, of fish breaking their hold and escaping. Considering the practice of many of the fishermen, it did not surprise me to hear of such mishaps. They make use of double or even triple gut, "rugging" the salmon after the manner of a schoolboy hauling in perch.

To conclude this notice of our sport on the Stinchar, I will give a short sketch of the most exciting run with a salmon I ever watched. When it is certified that the top fish of that season was hooked by the *back-fin* and killed with *single gut*, the time taken to land him will appear wonderfully short. Indeed, when clipped at the shallow he was not nearly done up.

His weight was upwards of 30 lb., and I was assured by the residents on its banks that they never saw "a bigger fish ta'en oot o' the Stinchar." It was certainly the largest landed during the time we were there. It came twice to the gled's wing, being fixed at the second rise. I have it preserved in a case with the fly through the fin exactly as when hooked.

I had tied a fly for each of the rods, with a wing of our favourite gled's tail. The next morning we had breakfast by candle-light, in order to be at the pools by break of day. The pools are only four in number, so my eldest son and I took the top and middle ones, leaving the lowest, called the Duckat Wheel, to the youngest fisher. Before long a hasty messenger brought tidings that the latter had hooked a heavy salmon. Leaving our rods, we ran down the bank to the Duckat, and saw that the angler had his work cut out for him for several hours. I never saw a fish played in better style, and the monster fighting for bare life made noble efforts to break his tiny chain of single gut. He bored, spurted, sulked, and, when rested, dashed up-stream at railway speed, springing clear of the water, and coming down on it again with a tremendous crash.

From eight o'clock till one he showed no symptoms of yielding, and it was nearly two o'clock before he allowed himself to be taken down-stream. My eldest son and our trusty follower Sandy, each armed with a gaff, were on opposite banks of the river, and seconded the fisher in leading down the salmon. As soon as he appeared within fifty yards of the lower ford, I called out, "Now, Sandy, leave the water; run for your life, and catch him at the shallow." It was an exciting moment when Sandy with his "clip" held low, his mouth firmly shut, and his keen eye fixed on the babbling current, the very picture of concentrated energy, sternly watched his prey.

Down and down steered the fish to the very jaws of his enemy; but, seeing the danger, he made a last languid spurt, and then permitted himself to be again guided to the fatal gaff. The stroke was given with cool determination, when, splashing through the water, and bent nearly double, Sandy dragged his prize to the shore, throwing his whole weight on the top of it.

LOCH SALMON-FISHING.

WHEN salmon-fishing in the Tweed many years ago, with one of the most scientific *habitués* of that river, I casually asked him whether a late celebrated Professor was really so good a fisher as he got credit for? He answered, with a shrug, "Oh, he's only a trouter." Had the speaker been *only a salmoner*, a plain inference might be drawn; but he was undeniably as expert at small fish as large. Indeed, I cannot conceive an adept at salmon-fishing who has not laid the foundation by a thorough knowledge of all the best modes of capturing trout. For my own part, I began at six years old, with a crooked pin and worm, to dabble for minnows and loaches, being gradually promoted to a hook and float for perch-angling; then ascending to burn-trout with bait, which naturally led the way to burn-trout with fly.

Once fairly entered at fly, my progress was rapid. I soon became dissatisfied with my basket unless it contained some good ones; and when large yellow trout in summer became shy of rising to artificial flies, I changed the lure to minnows, and other natural baits. At this time, too, I was a keen and successful pike-troller, and these fresh-water sharks first whetted my taste for really big fish. Having the advantage, however, of being near some fairish sea-trout streams, one autumn convinced me that the *Salmo trutta* made the best sport of any fish I had yet tried. No doubt large, lazy, well-fed yellow trout were powerful rivals in spring, but they were only attainable with *bait* in autumn, when the reign of the white trout with *fly* began.

As I had opportunity, I tried a cast for grilse or salmon; but my knowledge of the habits of fish and my practice being alike limited, the rises were of course few and far between, so I always turned with increased zest to the fat yellow trout in May, or the silvery sea ones in September. It was not until I was thoroughly acquainted with the nature of fish, and had acquired perfect command of the salmon-rod, that the intense excitement of hooking a 20-pounder tamed down my interest for all minor angling.

With the exception of boat-fishing in strictly preserved rivers, angling for large fish, in order to reach the deep pools and heavy streams where they lie, requires a length of line which few can ever attain to throw. But when the river-banks are at the same time encumbered by trees or other obstacles, the rods who can fish it well become select indeed. Of course the rises decrease in proportion to the want of power in reaching the casts; and the angler, however expert with a small rod and fly, loses confidence when he looks over his shoulder and sees a salmon struggling at his neighbour's line, hooked in the very pool he was unable a few minutes before to cast over. With the loss of confidence his patience also deserts him, and he returns to yellow trout, a stanch stickler for the theory that trouting is the most scientific of all fishing. But if a man has thorough mastery of a large rod, and quite comprehends the ways of the noble fish he is trying for—also the various moods of water, sky, air, time of day, &c., when the monster may be most successfully lured—the crowning requisite, patience, always comes of its own accord.

In ordinary rivers the most expert angler well knows that he must not expect many rises of big fish; he therefore uses all his skill and experience to hook those he *does* move. This attention constantly increases his stock of knowledge until he feels certain he can hook them if they *can* be hooked.

Where the rises are more numerous, there is not the same pains taken to profit by them; and this natural consequence partly explains what I have also noticed in shooting—viz., that a man who has lived among preserves, far from being so good a sportsman, is frequently not even to be compared as a steady shot with another whose whole practice is over wild unenclosed lands. The one blazes thoughtlessly away, committing time after time the same errors; while the other notes every miss, and endeavours to correct it next opportunity. There is also no doubt that both the angler and shooter who have to work and *think* for their sport, acquire a self-command and nerve only to be obtained in this school.

Although loch and river fishing seem distinct departments of the craft, yet the more closely they are studied the nearer do they approximate to each other. When white trout and salmon enter a fresh loch, if there is no stream large enough to ascend, they press to the mouths of the feeding burns; or should the loch itself be small, they first choose (as in rivers) the feeding-grounds farthest from the sea, those nearer gradually filling with "back fish." They have favourite rocks and banks all over the loch, exactly as they have favoured pools and streams in rivers. Lochs, as well as rivers, are most successfully fished when they fall after a heavy flood. In some places of a loch, like some pools of a river, fish never rise well at the fly, although the part of the loch and the pool of the river may look very tempting to the angler.

White trout and salmon creep down nearer the outlet of a loch as autumn advances, preparatory to choosing their spawning-beds. The top of a small loch is therefore best early in the year, the lower parts gradually improving as the season draws on. If, however, the feeders of a loch are large enough for fish to ascend, their first object is to seek these, and press up them. In the smaller lochs the feeding burns may admit sea-trout *during floods,* but are seldom large enough for salmon; the consequence is, that all the heavy fish remain in the loch till harvest, and are very apt to haunt the mouths of brooks during a spate. This is the case even in Loch Lomond, where, with the exception of the outlet (the Leven), there is no stream where salmon dare enter, except at the spawning-time; and it is amazing to see great fish at that season in mountain brooks that will scarce cover, far less conceal them.

In Loch Awe, where the fine feeder Orchy is ready to receive them, salmon seldom go up the loch at all. When clear of the river Awe (the outlet of the loch), they immediately press on to the Orchy, and enter it. Consequently, salmon are scarcely ever taken in the loch, except between the mouths of these rivers.

When salmon know they have the safety of a loch to look to as the reward of their efforts for fresh water, the struggle they hazard to gain their object is almost incredible. I have watched a shoal boring up the Knock for Loch Baa when they had to turn on their sides to force themselves through the shallows, and the noise caused by these exertions could be heard at a considerable distance. At first I fancied some creature was fording the stream, and, on walking up saw monsters of from 10 to 25 lb. fighting against water often only a few inches deep.

I have always been convinced that trolling is ruination to fly-fishing in small salmon lochs. All the shores, banks, and rocks have their feeding or resting fish driven into deep water, scared not only by the boat, but even by the long trolling-lines sweeping over.

Fly-practice in lochs from a boat is far less startling to fish; and the more complete the angler's knowledge of every sunk bank, rock, or shallow point, the less likely will he be to frighten them away. In order to obtain this angling geography, the loch should be surveyed in dry weather; and when the different feeding-grounds are discovered, they should be noted by marks from different positions opposite to or crossing each other. A decayed stump of a tree exactly opposite a shepherd's hut, making a triangle with a rock or the end of a point, may be the only available beacons to guide you to a first-rate *mid-loch* cast. For two years I had the right to one side of Loch Baa, and by these simple means, before the first season was half over, knew all the established casts fully as well as the fishing-guides, and found out some more they had no idea of.

Perfect confidence in this local knowledge is the foundation of success in lochs; and when the fisher fully possesses it, *and not till then,* will he perceive how many blunders he can prevent his boatman from committing. For instance, effectually to fish the feeding-grounds with the least risk of scaring them, it is absolutely necessary to know the exact spots where the salmon lie. When the feeding-ground has a sheer descent from shallow to deep water, this may be shrewdly guessed; but when the deep is reached gradually, a rise in the loch, or even a change of wind, may alter the seats of salmon a considerable way either side. As the angler's object is to keep his boat out of sight in deep water, and pitch his fly over the fish, when the water deepens suddenly from the bank or rock, he has simply to fish round them with a line longer or shorter, according to the state of the atmosphere or the power of the breeze. The salmon will all be found on or near the brow, and in a dark or windy day they do not see the boat until close on them. I have seen the heaviest fish rise and hook in such weather within a few yards of the boat, a rare chance for men who throw an indifferent line.

But should the day be clear, with only a light breeze, especially when casting over *shallow points and places where the water deepens by inches,* none but an accomplished master of the salmon-rod need hope for much success. Such ground must be approached with the greatest caution, or you may dash in among the shoal unawares. It is always best to err on the safe side, and begin to throw before you expect a rise, drawing in to the point where you think salmon really are by slow degrees.

Should the morning be favourable for fly, a little attention to the rising of the fish will save both time and trouble; but when the weather is not so propitious, and, in consequence, few rises to be seen, care and caution, far from wasting the day, are the chief means of insuring success at its close.

There was a long promontory half-way down Loch Baa, called the "Salmon Point," from being their grand rendezvous. The area of the feeding-ground extended to nearly 200 yards; and when they were rising briskly, we could fish it over in half the time required if they were dull and sulky. This cape was one of the favoured haunts where fish were sure to harbour all summer; and even on the days when none were seen feeding on the natural fly, you might depend on their resting below—hence the need of always going carefully over it. On two occasions, when wind and sky were all that could be wished, I had carefully gone over the Salmon Point without a rise, or even seeing a fish stir at the natural fly. The first time, when changing my cast for a fresh trial, the head of an otter above the best part of the water showed that my trouble would be useless. On the next unsuccessful day we were resting on the shore after sweeping the water thoroughly; the otter's head again appeared, when he dived all round the fishing-ground, and finally landed, and ran into the wood. Other casts of this loch were more uncertain, the salmon and white trout often changing their ground. Here I may mention a rather unaccountable fact long noted by me—viz., that a cast of a loch or a pool in a river will sometimes prove excellent for a whole season, and during the next scarcely afford a rise, yet no outward alteration can be detected either in the loch cast or river pool.

The size and colour of salmon-flies do not vary nearly so much in lochs as in rivers. One reason no doubt is, that there are fewer changes in a loch; another, that the loch season is generally shorter. I have often found red palmers, or a red body with "blae" wing, very acceptable to salmon in small lochs; in large lochs a green body and darker wing is a killing fly; but every tolerable fisherman ought to be able to find out *the* fly of the water he frequents; and if a stranger, he must trust a good deal to his fishing guide. There is often a loch-fly, which, take the season from end to end, you kill most heavy fish with; and yet there are many whole days in the same year when that fly will be rejected for another very unlike it. Neither is it a necessary consequence that the most killing fly of one year should be also the most successful of the next. On the contrary, I have experienced a complete change in the favoured fly of the season, not only in lochs, but in rivers.

The most deadly fly of the river Falloch altered every season of the three years I rented it; and although a large minnow was eagerly dashed at, both by white trout and heavy loch ones which ascended from Loch Lomond, yet I invariably fixed all the largest sea-trout with fly and the lightest tackle I dared risk. A grilse-rod and the finest gut made a Falloch trout of from 4 to 7 lb. a good substitute for a 15 or 20 lb. salmon with ordinary tackle. The best Falloch run I had was with a 4½-pounder hooked by the belly-fin. I had *almost* to swim before landing him.[1]

The heaviest Falloch sea-trout taken by me were from 5 to upwards of 7 lb.; but I have frequently captured them in Loch Baa from 9 to 12 lb. Like salmon, none of these Loch Baa monsters ever ascended the feeding burns, although in autumn one stream near the top of the loch was full of sea-trout from 1 to 3 lb. weight. My son, then a lad, used to row over to this mountain brook, and seldom returned without several of those white trout, besides a large basket of yellow. His last take was five sea-trout from 1½ to 3 lb., and seven dozen burn ones. He always fished with worm, and chose a day when the burn was quite dwindled. In such small water as this there was no need of a reel, but the gut required to be nearly as fine as horse-hair. As in burn-trout bait-fishing, he always threw up-stream, seldom, however, moving a sea-trout where the burn ones bit freely. These pigmies are obliged to keep their distance from the leviathans that invade them in autumn. Each sea-trout then chooses a pool, and preys easily and greedily in such clear confined water on the burn-trout fry, driving away those too large for food, in order to prevent them from sharing in the worms, slugs, &c., carried down the current. The little burn-trout are therefore compelled by fear, and the bigger ones by force, to desert the quarters of a dangerous and selfish usurper.

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[1] In the autumn of 1863, my last season on the Falloch, I landed twenty trout of an aggregate weight of 60 lb.

In loch-fishing, I have constantly observed that too much wind spoils sport more than too little, always excepting a dead calm. Salmon and white trout, however, will bear a stiffer gale than the yellow, at least if your boatman is expert at the oars, and perfectly knows the fishing-ground. If not, never take him out in a rough day, when you will find it impossible to make him obey your directions. A really efficient boatman is about as great a comfort as a thoroughly-trained retriever, and both contribute in no slight degree to the day's success. You may very soon teach for a fishing boatman an active and intelligent lad, but his first lessons should always be *learned in a calm.*

TROLLING FOR THE SALMO-FEROX.

"IT'S A FAR CRY TO LOCH OWE!"

Trolling for giant trout is the very acme of rod-fishing. It is generally thought that the whole of this exciting sport consists in fixing good baits upon the trolling-rod, letting out a sufficiency of line, and mainly relying upon the boatman's skill to point out the best fishing-ground. Although trolling after this fashion may occasionally be successful, yet the reverse is far oftener experienced, when all the blame is sure to be laid on the weather, as the best ground has been carefully searched, and the baits were excellent. Few gentlemen are aware how easily this best ground may be changed to a good distance on either side, by a bright sun, a breeze of wind, or a rise of the loch after rain. This is invariably the case where the shores are level, and the depth consequently gradual. Should the sky be dark and the loch discoloured, or, on the contrary, small and clear, with a cloudless sky, a difference in the size and colour of the bait, and rapidity in spinning it, may bring home an empty boat, or reward us with a couple of trout that will give the boatman as much trouble to carry as two buckets of water.

There are three kinds of trout that peculiarly belong to this description of fishing. And, first, the great salmo-ferox, from its size, strength, and cunning, deserves the highest place.

Next, the gillaroo (pronounced "ghirroo" by the Highlanders), which, although not nearly so shy, nor of such giant proportions as the other, yet has been frequently taken from sixteen to eighteen pounds. (I have never fished much for them myself, and the largest I have caught was five pounds weight. I hooked him with minnow near the foot of Loch Lubnaig, as I rowed home after fly-fishing the green sunk banks at the top. He was in excellent condition, but in fight and appearance strongly reminded me of a barbel.) And, lastly, the famous trout of the Thames. It seldom attains the dimensions even of our gillaroo; but it merits a place among the triumvirate, both from its beauty and the skill required to hook it.

In trolling for any of these fish, especially for the salmo-ferox, great attention should be paid to the tackle, not only that it is all of the very best quality, but also that it is dressed in the manner least apt to miss the trout. Of course the angler must not expect many runs in a day, which makes it particularly vexatious when the fish that *do* dash at the bait escape the hooks. In boat-trolling for smaller trout, I often use but two hooks—a large one through the tail of the bait, and a lesser through its mouth. This has many advantages: you bait quickly and easily, the appearance of the minnow is not spoiled, and when the trout are at all greedy, they don't often miss. There is this to be said against it, however, that when shy fish bite warily, they may sometimes seize the bait by the middle, and, for want of middle hooks, blow it away again, when slightly pricked by the others. The spinning also is neither so quick nor so true as by the following method, which I have tried with great success. It is, first a single hook, next three tied back to back, then another single one tied the reverse way, ending with a second trio. Of course, when trolling for the feroxes, all the hooks must be very large. This latter plan, when properly baited, moves very naturally; and although there are so many hooks, I am convinced, *from the rapidity of the spinning,* they are even less perceptible than when there are few. One of the last hooks being inserted *at the side* of the bait's tail, the whole tail-fin catches the water better than by the other more simple method; and there are three hooks for the shoulder and three for the tail, the two places where the feroxes are most apt to strike. I am quite sure, after trying both ways, that this last plan not only misses fewer trout, but secures a greater number of runs. I should therefore strongly recommend it when large shy fish are the object, although not where trout are small and plentiful, especially in cold weather, when the difficulty of baiting is a serious objection.

When fairly afloat, beware of trusting too implicitly to your boatman, even should you be totally unacquainted with the loch. It commonly happens, unless he is a good practical fisher, that he will take you over the same ground under all circumstances; and should no fish run, lay the blame on something unpropitious in the day, which it may require some ingenuity on his part to discover, and some credulity on yours to believe. Your best plan with such a guide is to make him be most particular about the surest resorts of the large fish; and should you be unsuccessful the first time of going over them, try again a little nearer the shore, if there is much wind; or, if it be calm, a little further out, *especially when the loch is small.* Towards dusk you may generally keep nearer the shore, also when the loch has risen, or is discoloured with rain. You must not then sink the baits so deep, but raise them by taking off some of the sinking-lead—not by winding up a part of the line, as the shallower you troll the more need of a long line. It is always a good plan to have baits of different sizes; the larger upon the outside rod, which should have the longest line and heaviest lead. This rod should be fixed by the butt, at the opposite side of the boat, so as to cross before you. I need not say the reel and line must be quite free. Keep the other rod in hand, now and then sinking the point in the water as it grows deeper or the day calmer. Should the rod across the boat hook a fish, instantly throw the other to the boatman next you, who may wind it up out of your way, his comrade guiding the boat with both oars. If the fish is large, he will most likely strike away from the boat, and your first effort should be to shorten your line by backing water. Whenever the fish is under command of a short line, and you can persuade him to follow the boat, land and kill him from shore.

While sitting in the stern, be always on the look-out for weeds, and give the alarm. Your boatman will immediately turn rapidly into the deep; and you, raising a rod in each hand as high as possible, should make every effort to keep the baits near the surface. If this is done cleverly, it may prevent that major misery of boat-trolling, *a double fast.* If fortunate enough to get clear, it may be as well to examine the baits; indeed this should be done at intervals throughout the day, as a small green weed attached to the bait will prevent it from spinning, or, at all events, act as a damper to the trout. Fish always for such shy customers with a very long line, especially if there is little wind to curl the water. Where the shores are level, the depth is generally gradual; therefore try the good places at various depths, as your own judgment may suggest. But should the rock or mountain rise abruptly from the margin, the water almost always deepens suddenly within a short distance of the shore. Once going over is quite enough if you keep between the shallow and the deep, which only occupies a few yards. When sky and water are dull, a large bright bait, such as a salmon-smelt, is very good; but if the loch is clear and low, bait one rod with a parr instead of a burn-trout, the ordinary bait.

Never find fault with your boatmen, when the hooks stick fast, for taking you into too shallow water. If you do, they will most likely prevent this annoyance, by keeping too deep for any fish to see your bait. Most fishing-guides are too apt, at any rate, to err this way, to save themselves trouble, as they dread a fast even more than the angler. The truth is, when trolling for the salmo-ferox, the baits should be hung only a few yards from the bottom. They must therefore frequently catch a weed, or root, or sunk rock. Be assured that the largest fish are generally taken by trolling close to the bottom, as they are lazy. In roughish weather row slowly, in order to give them a good opportunity of seeing and seizing the bait; quicker in a mild clear day, for it is then as well to give them little time to reflect. East and north are the worst winds for Loch Awe; west, south-west, and even north-west are very favourable. By adhering to these rules, a fair troller ought to take one or two large feroxes every good day.

In the year 1842 I had five days' trolling on Loch Awe, and as I noted down each day's success, I shall here record it.

Headquarters, Cladich, April 30th.—Did not go out till five o'clock; a fine evening, but too calm. Trolled down three miles on the Cladich side of the loch, returned over the same ground, a little nearer shore; not a tug until dusk, when we were within half a mile of the inn. I then hooked a fish: he was a dull wretch, and made indifferent play. Weight, eight pounds. When brought to table he cut up white, but was firm and good to eat. I have observed two kinds of the salmo-ferox—one dark-skinned and white in the flesh, the other pink in flesh, and of starry scales. The latter always makes the most spirited resistance. Perhaps it may be inferred that there is only one kind, and that the difference arises from their condition. This is not the case, however, as I have taken white-fleshed specimens in the finest possible order.

May 2d.—Started at seven for Castle Connal, about midway between Cladich and the ford at the foot of the loch. Castle Connal bay a great resort for the heavy fish. Killed a brace, one six pounds, the other two and a half. Trolled till six o'clock.

May 3d.—A close sultry wind; did not go to fish till after dinner, when it got brisker. Tried the islands and head of the loch; hooked a fine fish off Enish Isle; he made capital play for half an hour, when I stranded him upon the island. Weight, nine and a half pounds, in first-rate condition, and a beautiful fish. Had a look at the island, and a description of it from old Sandy. It is a fine green sheep-pasture, and often called the green isle, as well as Enish Isle, or Ellen's Island. Ellen was a daughter of Sir James M'Naughton, and was the first person buried in the island. She was drowned in the loch. The poor chief of Lochiel, who was stabbed with the penknife in Castle Connal, was also buried here. After having satisfied my craving for traditions, true or false, we re-entered the boat, and coasted Fruichland, or the Heather Island. The Castle of Fruichland is a picturesque ruin. Sir James M'Naughton was once governor of it, and, when Ben Cruachan was a deer-forest, Alexander the Third sojourned in the castle to enjoy forest sport. Its shore, however, afforded none to me. We now coasted the mainland to the head of the loch, where I hooked a small fellow, only one pound and three quarters—came round the opposite side, and entered the estuary of the Awe, a fine black deep creek, but I never hooked a large fish in it. To-day we only got a small thing, rather more than a pound. To make up, Sandy was profuse in story. Pointing to the dark threatening mountain, with the white streak of the winter drift upon its summit, "It was on the side o' Ben Cruachan here, that the Irish chief, M'Faydon, was beat by Sir William Wallace, and chased into a cave yonder" (showing a crag opposite). "Sir William fand him oot, however, an' stuck his head on a spear on the tap o' the craig, by order o' Sir Neil Campbell, Black Knight o' Loch Owe."

I was pondering over the rock, where the Irish chief's knowledge-box had, no doubt, afforded a resting-place for the sage owls of the neighbouring dells, when Sandy again called my attention to a brook, fringed with oak copse, which trickled over the heathery brow of Ben Cruachan. From his solemn air I expected an improvement on the Black Knight's cruelty to poor

M'Faydon. "Yon's an awfu' place for wild-cats. I heard them answering ither wi' sic screighs, ae nicht whan I passed late, I thocht I wad hae been frichtened oot o' ma joodgment." "And what did you do, Sandy?" "I jist falded ma arms across ma throat, an' ran past the burn as hard as I could split. Catch me gang past that place again after the gloamin'!"

There is something very imposing in this outlet of the Awe: the rocks on each side so rugged and steep; the narrow deep water so dark from their shadow. If you drop a pebble into it, the sound is so vivid and hollow, you shudder at the distance it must sink before finding its bed. I rather think the sudden and great depth of the water is one reason why so few fish frequent this creek. We now emerged from the bay, and coasted the stony cheerful shore of New Inverawe. When skirting this shallow, and gliding slowly past the little isles which lie beyond, Sandy is always in expectation "o' a rug." He was not gratified by one to-day.

May 4th.—Up at four o'clock, intending to troll down to the ford at the foot of the loch, a distance of nineteen miles. It was a dead calm when we rowed off, but, from certain appearances in the sky the evening before, we were pretty sure of at least as much wind as we wanted before breakfast-time. So it proved. By ten o'clock we had a south-wester which effectually barred our progress farther down than Castle Connal. Put about, and drifted back with the wind, trolling the best bays and shores on each side of the loch. Hooked a very fine trout off a rocky point five miles below Port Sonachan. It was tenderly hooked, and slipped off, to our chagrin. Crossed to the Sonachan side, and hooked another with a salmon-smelt. Landed him, after a tough struggle of three-quarters of an hour, on Bala-Menach shore; ten pounds, and in the finest condition. No more runs till we passed Cladich burn, and began to pull along the inhabited island. I then hooked a fish which soon came to the top of the water, and I saw he was a pike. Sandy assured me it was "ane o' thae *new* beasts that cam' doon the Orchy frae Loch Tulla, that my Lord Breadalbane pat in." We made small bones of him, as he was only four pounds weight. Got two more trout, rather above a pound, on our way home.

May 5th.—I had now only one more day to spare, and was disappointed at being unable to devote it to the west end of the loch, at "the foord," decidedly the best trolling-ground for the large fish. It was a squally, showery morning, so I waited to see if the afternoon would clear up. There was no change, but as the wind was westerly I ordered out the boat about four o'clock. Trolled down three miles, when I had "a rug." Landed the trout in a few minutes—only two pounds. Crossed over and searched the Inistrinich shore on our return. Unsuccessful, till we reached a very weedy creek nearly opposite Cladich, which Sandy was anxious to avoid. But to me it looked so tempting that I made him turn in, although he cast many a rueful look at his great enemies, the weeds. About half-way down the little bay, a strong lively fish seized the bait; we got clear of the confined water with some difficulty, landed, and played him from shore. Although he only weighed six pounds, I have seldom taken out a more high-mettled trout. The evening was bitterly cold, so we did not bait again, but pulled straight for the harbour of Cladich, and next day drove over the hill to Inverary for a short sojourn there. Caution:—Always weigh the large fish yourself, or see them weighed, when at a fishing inn, otherwise they will probably weigh two pounds heavier down-stairs than up.

When the loch has been thoroughly flooded, you must wait till it falls in considerably, as the large fish especially are glutted with food, and lazy, after continued wet weather. Upon the water diminishing, they soon become more alert than before the rain.

The best time of year for the salmo-ferox is the end of April, May, and the beginning of June. They are very dormant all July and August, particularly if the weather be hot. Although much more shy than in spring, they sometimes take pretty fair in September. A small bait is generally most successful in this month. The large ones lie farther from the shore than earlier in the season. Many of the best worth hooking even haunt the middle of the loch at this time of year. I killed two in September 1850 *in mid-loch,* which weighed twelve and a half and twelve pounds. Some of the Loch Awe fishing-guides suggested to me, that the partiality of the feroxes for deep water then might be occasioned by the pike driving the small trout from the shallows, and that the feroxes followed the shoals into the deep to prey upon them. But if this is the reason, why don't they do so in May and June ? In autumn a good fish is sometimes taken in the estuary of the Awe, called the " Brander," as they are making for the river to spawn. The Brander is generally blank at any other time.

The salmo-feroxes are, as a rule, much smaller in the northern lochs than in those of the Western Highlands. Trolling for five days in Loch Layghal, in Sutherland, our total was nine fish. The largest fourteen pounds, a very unusual size there, but an ugly fish. The next, eleven pounds, a great beauty, which we had preserved. Then an eight-pounder, and several from four to seven pounds. Loch Assynt contains the largest feroxes in the county, but we had only time to troll it one forenoon, and brought in a twelve-pound fish, and another of five. Of the many lochs I have trolled, I never found one with so clear a channel as Assynt.

The larger feroxes never run with a very full loch. You may possibly hook a small one, but the only fish worth the trouble of trying for will not dash at your spinning bait till the water clears and falls in a good deal. Small feroxes frequently take a fly, but I never knew save one large one do so, and that was actually in the river Awe, where most likely it had gone for spawning. It weighed seventeen pounds, and was preserved as a curiosity.

Those who prefer the phantom minnow or parr to natural bait, will find the brown phantom best for Loch Layghal, though, for Loch Shin, the green is most deadly. For my own part, I prefer the natural bait to either. A phantom enthusiast assured me that in his hand the apparition had quite beat the natural bait, until he fastened false gills to the latter, when they were about equal. This showed pretty well that the real bait had no fair play until the gills were stuck on. Of course, if any one is not fisherman enough to make the natural bait spin true without gills, the phantom must then beat it. We had plenty phantom parrs, but when the time of trial came, both of us declined the honour of precedence, as each was persuaded that the substance was better than the shadow.

The vast number of huge salmon that were captured in the spring of 1877 in Loch Tay with the phantom parr, has been unrivalled in the annals of Scotch fishing sport. The crests, however, of the successful fishermen were considerably lowered by the well-known fact, that comparatively little skill is necessary to enable any average angler to share to the full in these piscatorial triumphs. He has only to go down to the loch armed with three-ply casting-lines, tested reel-lines 120 yards long, a good assortment of phantom parrs, and very strong trolling-rods. All the Loch Tay boatmen are quite equal to their department, and will do him every justice—and more! They select his phantoms, warn him how much pirn-line to let out behind the coble, and the depth to which each phantom ought to be sunk. Lastly, they will take him over all the likely water—the best of it over and over again. When a fish strikes, they watch the bend of the rod and humour every dodge of the struggling monster. If it rushes away they will follow it; if it sneaks towards the boat, they will foil the ruse by a ready movement in the opposite direction; and so dexterously is all effected, that however slovenly the fisherman may be in handling his reel, the bend of the rod is seldom relaxed,—for well do these trained boatmen know, that although the rod *may* break in clumsy hands, yet the fish's hold, from the excellent arrangement of the hooks, is not likely to do so; as for the tackle, it would hold—a bull!

Next in importance for heavy fish to the March trolling of Loch Tay, is the November boat-angling of the Tweed. There is this difference, however, that it requires a moderately good fisherman to be successful here. The boatmen are at least as expert as their brethren of Loch Tay, and do the angler equal justice. The practice differs considerably from that of most other rivers, especially those where you fish from the banks. After delivering your cast, you must not raise the point of the rod an inch, but bring the fly slowly round to the stern of the coble, the rod all the time being perfectly horizontal. The object of this is to sink the fly, which the fish, of course, suck under water, nothing but the "bell-up" appearing on the surface. Should an angler raise his rod ever so little, he is instantly warned by the man at the oar, "If ye do that, sir, ye'll no' hook a fish."

By the kind permission of the noble proprietor, my two eldest sons had a couple of days on the Floors water, landing twenty-eight salmon between them. Four of these were thirty pounds weight, and the smallest was one under twenty pounds. They were both satisfied, for one had the advantage in weight, the other in numbers.

Double-hooked, gaudy, and *very expensive* flies are the present favourites on Tweedside both in spring and autumn—a complete contrast to my early fishing days of that stately river. A list of a few of the most deadly flies now used is subjoined:—Jock Scott, Silver Doctor, Sudden Death, Parson, Durham Stranger, Fraser, Barker Duncan, The Captain.

Having heard that many of the largest fish often lingered in the lower reaches of the Tweed, I went in November 1876 to Norham, but the practice on that part of the river would not invite a second visit. After putting up my rod, I was given a lump of lead, and desired to fasten it a yard above the fly —the fishing-guide assuring me I should have no chance otherwise. The fly must be sunk near mid-water, he said, thus degrading it into a minnow. The lead most effectually hindered all good casting (which, I was told, was unnecessary); so after fishing from 11 till 2, I was heartily sick of it, and did not scruple to say so. "Weel, sir, there has scarcely a fish ta'en the flee for the last week; but wadna ye try the minnow?" "That is illegal," quoth I. "Ou, never mind that; they a' dae sae here." After a pause, "Nae fish hae been landed withoot it lately." I declined for myself, but had some curiosity to watch him. Whipping out of his pocket a small bottle of live minnows, he carefully baited a tackle, and with heavy lead sunk it to within an inch or two of the bottom, thus degrading the minnow in *its* turn into a worm. He fished with a very short line, and trailed his bait by irregular jerks backwards and forwards. After fishing for some time without an offer, his comrade, who had stationed himself on a good look-out, called down, "Jamie, there's somebody coming." In a trice the minnow was exchanged for fly; but when the "somebody" came near enough, he again shouted, "Ou, it's naebody," when the minnow was again donned with equal celerity. On asking what was the matter, he replied, "I mistook him for the water-bylie."

TROLLING AND TROUTING RULES.

As I have already stated, the largest salmo-feroxes never run when a loch is full or discoloured, although the smaller ones may. Fly-trout also often rise well in a flooded loch, if the sky is good and the wind fair. Small feroxes of five or six pounds frequently take the fly at such times. East wind is always bad, even should the sun be powerful. When you are trolling with a north wind, or a still more unfortunate easterly breeze, pay most attention to those parts where hills and gullies make the wind strike as if from south or west. For years I imagined this could make no difference. Practice at length convinced me to the contrary; for when the wind was in such unpropitious quarters, if I hooked a fine fish, it was almost always by the help of those fictitious gales. I am well aware many will doubt and laugh. I don't pretend to account *for* it, but have often found my account in attending *to* it. When the wind scours the loch in frequent gusts, and as suddenly dies away into a calm, the troller has a great advantage who knows all the straths and hollows where it comes down and first strikes any good water.

In the early part of the season the points keep most fish. As the year advances, the bays are the surest find. In autumn a heavy fish is often hooked about the mouths or estuaries of rivers and burns, which, earlier in the season, would have been trolled in vain. Of course, the fish is making for the running water to spawn. The Brander, at the head of the river Awe, seldom harbours a good salmo-ferox except at such times. When one of these fish strikes, hooks, and drops off, instantly let out some line with your hand from the reel, and he will sometimes follow and fasten firmly. This I have frequently proved.

In the smaller lochs the country people will often warn you that " the big fish don't begin to take " till a certain hour, and leave off at another. Pay attention to the stated times, but never grudge to begin your trolling earlier in the morning than they advise, and prolong it as late in the evening as you please. We were assured that there was little chance of a salmo-ferox in Loch Layghal after three o'clock. Most of those we hooked took greedily at least two hours later.

In fine calm summer nights, fish feed so well as to be rather lazy next day. This applies to fly-trout in particular. A rough night, succeeded by a calmer day, has of course the contrary effect, so the trouter should take advantage of it.

In still sunny weather the salmo-ferox feeds nearer the top. Troll then with a finer wheel-line (if you have it), a much lighter casting-line, no lead, and smaller swivels. Often the best fish are taken in that sort of weather. By adopting this plan the first day I was out on Loch Awe one season, I slew a fifteen-pound fish, and another of six pounds, with only a light breath of air. As a *general* rule, however, the nearer the bottom you troll for large fish the better.

In the smaller, shallower lochs, the feroxes are often collected in shoals. Should you hook or kill one, try them again over the same place until they stop running. In minnow-trolling for yellow trout, you may often have great success by attending to this rule. But when you happen upon a shoal of sea-trout, salmon, or grilse in a loch, be especially particular to come over them again and again, whether you are fishing with the troll or the fly. In *very shallow* lochs the fly-trout are often afraid to come within reach of the shores till evening. To know this, may often fill a creel that would otherwise come back empty.

Always, if possible, dry trolling-lines by pulling them out along the shores when you have done fishing. If dried in a room, they twist, and give far more trouble. If not pulled out to dry every time after use, they soon rot.

Neither rules nor practice will make a man an angler, unless he has a turn for it, although love of scenery or love of "Father Izaak" sometimes induces him to try. Such enthusiasts deserve better sport than they often obtain. A drunken fishing-guide of Loch Awe was piloting one of them, when he accidentally fixed a heavy fish. "He's running away with my line, I tell you." "Give him a turn round the thowel-pin," suggests little Joe. "He pulls it out still," complains the rod-handler. "Then give him two," says Joe, with all the authority of experience. Of course the *two* broke the fish. Another was quite content if allowed to pitch his fly among the prisoners of the draught-net, arguing that, as the fish were there, and must of course see the fly, it was *their* fault, and not *his*, if they refused it. A " wit " residing on Loch Lomond, unlike these devotees (whose pardon I beg if implying they were no wits), at once detected his lack of gift for the rod, and was candid enough to give me solid reasons why his first day's fishing was also his *last*. " In those days white trout were very plentiful in the loch, and by mere chance, the first day I ever tried, I had the misfortune to hook a large one. Having no boatman, I pulled after it right across to the opposite shore. Upon taking up my rod when the fish seemed *quieter*, it gave a tug and broke my line. I then took out my watch to see how long this fool's chase had lasted, when the coble gave a lurch, and my valuable gold watch and bunch of seals toppled over the side, and most likely found a fob in the soft mud at the bottom of the water. Can you wonder, then, that I shirk a rod as if it were a serpent, or that I decline another introduction to a sea-trout until all the spirit has been boiled out of him ? "

Sometimes, spite of all odds, the bungler gains the day. One of the most accomplished fishers I ever knew moved a salmon three times in the first pool he tried. As it showed signs of laziness, instead of " waiting on," he judged it best to give an hour's " law." Looking over his shoulder when preparing for the next pool, he saw the village tailor, who had scarcely ever thrown a line in his life, with his fish firm and fast, having fixed it at the first rise. He was standing aghast and helpless before the mighty spirit he had raised, and had no power to control. My friend had the good-nature to run back and save the fish, but he always described the contest between Snip and the salmon as the most aggravating sight that had ever stirred his spleen. In the summer of 1855, a tempting trout haunted a weir upon the river Kennet, in Berkshire. It set at nought all the best anglers of the district, until the miller, seeing it gulp down a piece of potato, took the hint, and immediately hooked it. This fish weighed ten pounds, and its Irish taste gave rise to much speculation.

These great loch-trout are becoming more shy every year. Last season my sons and I tried them with three-ply, and even single gut, as they seemed scared by gimp. It is certain that they came at the bait less cautiously, and seized it with greater avidity, than when the casting-line was gimp. Out of seven, which we landed in four days, only one was fixed by gimp tackle ; and strange to say, it was the only ferox which took the phantom parr, but it was hooked foul. All our other fish ran either at a natural parr or at a small burn-trout, the parr being the favourite. There was generally a phantom on one of the rods, oftenest of moderate, but now and then of large size.

RIVER-TROUTING.

MY first advice to the beginner in river-fishing is to give himself little trouble about the old-fashioned descriptions and arrangement of flies, such as good old Izaak (unequalled as a writer) has so elaborately, and, I must say, so unnecessarily discussed. The *theory* of fly-fishing has been much simplified since his day, and a few directions as to its *practice* are all I think necessary to give. For the sake of illustration, I will take the Almond and the Water of Leith near Coltbridge, two streams well known to all Edinburgh anglers, and which also bear a strong resemblance to many of the English rivers. The trout in both these waters, especially the latter, *were*, for I am sorry I cannot say *are*, shy, well fed, and lazy; and here, if anywhere, one would imagine that the whole absurd catalogue of artificial flies would be needed to tempt their dainty appetites. So far, however, from this being the case, I have never used more than three or four different kinds during the whole spring and summer, and was generally at least as successful as any of my numerous competitors. These flies were the same as those I have mentioned under loch-fishing, only of course suiting the size of the hook to the nature and quality of the stream, according as it is much whipped over, &c. If the angler pleases, he may vary the mouse-body to the water-rat, which will make it a little darker for a bright day; and a bunting's is the best blae-wing he can use. When the water is very small I have occasionally omitted the mallard and teal wings, for the sake of lightness, and fished with the flies as palmers. At Coltbridge especially, the trout, from being constantly harassed with anglers, require very fine fishing. I have taken most of the fat heavy ones either with the mouse-body and snipe or bunting wing, or a small black palmer, hook a No. 0 or No. 1 at the largest. If the water should be rather swollen and discoloured, always use the mallard-wing and red hackle for the trail, and it is a good plan to clip off a piece of the shank of the hook before tying the fly. You may thus fish with a No. 2 as lightly as a 1, which is a great point in all still waters where the trout are shy.

To fish these deeps with success, the angler must not only be able to throw a long line most delicately, but also attain the art of making his fly alight within an inch of any given point, in order to take advantage of the rises of the trout. When the fly is dropped in the *centre of the ring, the instant after the trout has belled up*, it is ten times more likely to rise again than if the fly touched the water at ever so short a distance, even if thrown as lightly as possible and clearly seen by the fish. There is more art in this than most anglers are aware of. In dragging the cast, the gut should not cause the *slightest ripple ;* to prevent which the flies must be sunk a little, and the motion be slow. It is also very desirable to attain the knack of throwing well when trees are close behind you ; as trout, especially in summer, are apt to harbour under them for the sake of the insects that are blown off into the water beneath.

There is often in summer a small black fly that keeps playing on the top of the water, and every now and then alighting for a moment, as if tempting its aquatic foe. When the angler sees this fly thus sporting with the jaws of death, let him always have a small black hackle on his cast. There is also another summer-fly which comes down upon the river in great numbers,—they keep all together, and hover about two or three inches above the surface. The trout follow them in shoals, and in the Almond I have seen half-a-dozen heads at a time darting up at the busy throng above. As these flies do not alight on the water even for an instant, the trout are all intent on seizing them *in the air;* and there being generally a dead calm where these insects congregate, your cast, though thrown ever so lightly, has more the effect of alarming than of enticing the fish. It is most tantalising; but all that can be done is to take a few light casts now and then, *stopping whenever the trout cease to rise.* By this cautious proceeding, you may take one or two of the most greedy. When I have caught trout at such times, I have observed that they as often as not took the fly on the cast least resembling the insect.

It would be treason to doubt the omnipotence of the May-fly, whose reign, however, seldom begins in Scotland till June. The more ignorant the angler, the more determined will he be to have the imitation on his cast when the natural fly is on the water. Well, let him—it will kill; but whether better, either in May or June, than those I have named, let the man who can deftly throw them judge for himself. I was at one time as great a stickler for the May-fly as any one, but for the last few years have had none upon my cast, and never missed his company. I don't profess to be a theorist in my fishing, but have come to the conclusion that a few judicious shades from light to dark are quite sufficient when fishing with *small flies* for yellow trout, whether or not they take them for a known insect; and the least observant man, by having four of the flies I have mentioned on his cast, will soon find out whether light, dark, or medium is the order of the day.

When river-fishing, I never trouble myself with more tackle than three or four casts round my hat, each having a different trail—thus being able to fish with the fly *as trail,* which seems for the time the favourite. If unacquainted with the stream, it may be as well to have a few additional casts, with the hooks of different sizes.

In some very muddy waters, such as the Ale in Selkirkshire (exactly the colour of its name), a single thread of silver is recommended when fishing with a dark fly. I tried this, but found a red palmer quite as effective. No doubt, however, the tinsel is good in such a case, though I have seldom seen a river discoloured enough to require it.

Another hint to the young angler is to mind what he is about when he approaches the still deeps of the river. Many are apt to pass them by altogether, and scarcely try a cast until they come to the pools and streams again. Perhaps the best test of a finished performer is the manner in which he fishes these dead, deep places, especially if there is little wind, for they generally harbour the largest and best-fed fish, which are, of course, the most suspicious and difficult to rise. We will suppose a first-rate angler approaching one of these uprippled deeps: his tackle is of the very lightest description; he is watching with a hawk's eye for the rising of a trout. Should he see one, he instantly moves up till within rather a distant cast of the place, taking advantage of any bush or tuft of reeds which may the better conceal him; or, if necessary, going down on his knee, ready to drop his cast, light as gossamer, right across the next circle which the crafty fish may make by sucking down another incautious fly. If the trout should rise, he is not unlikely to be one well worth hooking, and to give good sport in such quiet water. When there is breeze enough to make much ripple, it may prevent any but a quick and practised eye from seeing the rises *most worth notice;* in which case the water should be fished with as long a line and as light casts as possible. You need not despair should trees or any other obstacle prevent your sweep from being so free as otherwise it ought, for if you are suitably dressed,[1] and make no rapid motions, you will be so masked by the trees or bushes as to allow of a much nearer approach and shorter cast. In the Water of Leith there are two pools a little way above the bridge, overshadowed by old trees, and much frequented by large heavy trout. There I have been often more successful than when my sweep was perfectly unencumbered; and I must be allowed to mention a curious circumstance which happened to me some years ago in one of these said pools. Having tied a cast rather hurriedly in the morning, I hooked a good fish upon my bob, a mouse-body and snipe-wing, when the single knot slipped. Two days after, when fishing the same place, I again hooked and killed a fine trout, upwards of a pound weight, and, to my astonishment, my own handiwork with two inches of gut was sticking in its lip. One of the fraternity, sedulously employed on the opposite bank, remarked that "it must have been an honest trout, for it was not for want of temptation that he kept the hook for the right owner!" He also related a fact of the same kind which had happened a week or two before. A friend of his was fishing with minnow, when the tackle caught in a tree behind, and not being able to reach it, he had broken the gut. Soon after, when some one was shaking the tree, to secure the tackle, it dropped off into the water, and being slightly loaded with lead, immediately sank. Next day an eel was taken at a set-line with a piece of gut hanging out of its mouth, and the very person who had lost the tackle being on the spot, it occurred to him that it might be his, which proved to be the case.

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[1] The slate-blue of the heron's back is the best colour for a fisher's dress.

The insensibility to pain, which an angler can scarcely fail to notice in these cold-blooded creatures, is a point which happily redeems from cruelty the necessary inflictions of his craft. I recollect catching three fine trout one evening when trolling on Loch Lomond with a friend, and we discovered hanging out of the mouth of one of them a strong hair-line. On opening the fish, we found a large bait-hook fixed firmly in its stomach, the wicker and part of the hook being nearly digested. The creature had evidently been caught and broke away from a set-line, and though hooked in so vital a part, not only took our bait greedily, and made a most capital fight for a quarter of an hour, but was in the very finest condition, having fattened on his hard fare, instead of wasting from torture.

The last hint I have to give on the still parts of the river is, that when the large trout refuse to rise, being sated with summer flies, a *small* minnow about dusk is most likely to succeed.

With regard to the streams, and more rapid parts of the river, it certainly requires practice to find out the feeding-places of trout. There is always a good cast just where the water begins to steady itself, after falling and foaming over a ledge of rock—also in the eddies caused by roots, stones, branches of trees, &c. An angler who loves his craft will very soon become knowing in this department, and will then find much less difficulty here than in the still deeps. Of course, the more rapid the water the less likely is the trout to observe either a fisher on the banks or his line, though perchance heavily thrown. But show me the man who can fish the *still* parts of the river with tact and science, and I will be answerable for the rest of his performance. As to wind, which most anglers make such a fuss about, although a moderate breeze is a *sine quâ non* in loch-fishing, and also an advantage to the clumsy craftsman on the river, yet if the water is in its best state, and the sun not very bright, a first-rate angler would rather have *too little* than *too much.*

The above observations apply equally to all the rivers and streams I have fished; and my practice has been in many parts of England, as well as in the north, south, east, and west of Scotland.

LENNIE BURN.

How many recollections does the name of Lennie Burn arouse! None that have ever trod those pleasant paths, or threaded the devious track of that enchanting glen, will wonder that memory lingers there with fond delight. The ivied rocks, the fragrant woodbine, and countless varieties of wild flowers, combined with the rare exotics which the hand of art had scattered there,—above all, the symphony of the brook gurgling within its rocky bed, and ending with a fall, which, if not so wild as Bracklinn, surpasses it both in height and beauty. Many a sultry summer day have I wandered among these shady walks, listening to the sleepy burn, or watching the little trout suck down an occasional insect from among the myriads flickering about the surface. "The pool," a sort of reservoir and headquarters of the burn-trout, always particularly engaged my attention. I soon learned to distinguish every inmate, not only from its size and hue, but also its temper and disposition. Some were shy; others, greedy and tyrannical; and these several qualities were often exhibited so plainly, that we might learn a lesson even from a fish.

There was a small pond, formed by an old course of the burn, which, from time to time, was another source of speculation and amusement. It had a constant supply of fresh water from a spring, and although the inhabitants of this little basin were completely imprisoned, yet they were in no want of sustenance, from the bottom being soft and muddy, covered with leaves and decomposed vegetable matter. The place was surrounded by trees, which rained down abundance of flies, caterpillars, &c., for two or three trout, which, no one knows how, had found their way in.

During the latter end of autumn and the whole of winter, no sign of life was to be seen in this retired standing pool; but about the middle of February, if the weather was mild and the sun warm, a slight shaking noise let me know that the frogs had awaked from their winter sleep. By peeping cautiously over the bank, screening myself behind the trees, I discover one or two heads above the surface, which, sometimes singly, and then in chorus, emit the tremulous croak which had excited my attention. Should the weather still continue warm, every day adds to the number of heads, and the spawn rapidly accumulates in a shallow corner of the well. The croaking is now so loud as to be heard at some distance, not merely from the increase of voices, but that each note acquires double force, the more warm and genial the day. When the cold returns, as in our springs it is so apt to do, many of the frogs seek their winter covering, and the croak of those that remain dwindles into a faint treble, instead of their full diapason. A touch of frost will cause all the frogs to disappear, and make the top of the spawn as white as an oyster. But the first warm sun and mild air bring them to the surface again, and restore the spawn to its original colour. It is then most curious to observe their gambols, jumping and tumbling about like boys at *leap-frog*—and no doubt the origin of this favourite game of the playground. After a time the frogs all leave the pool, and small black eggs are formed in the spawn, which gradually increase in size until little tadpoles emerge.

But now a more interesting visitor may sometimes be seen The first burst of spring has brought into life the earlier insects, and with them the subtle, active trout. In this little pond I have counted three; two of them very small, the other about six inches long. My attention was first directed to them one fine July evening, when I saw what appeared to be fish rising. I crept forward, and soon perceived the larger trout amidst a crowd of summer insects, some buzzing about the surface, and others settling upon it. He was sucking them down lazily and at intervals, like a finished gourmand at a satisfactory dinner. But here the resemblance ends; for, upon my stepping forward, he darted to the other side of the tank, with a celerity very unlike the respected gentleman aforesaid when leaving his ample board. In my evening walks I seldom omitted to take a peep at the little pond, and soon discovered that my spotted friend was not solitary; and one or other of them was almost always to be seen during the season.

Spring came round again, and I resolved to watch the first appearance of these trout. Accordingly, as soon as I noticed fish rising in the streams, I went to the pond several times a-day. It was not, however, till the beginning of April that I perceived the largest trout looking very heavy and dull, but making no attempt to feed. I watched it for a quarter of an hour, when, contrary to its usual custom of darting among the bushes at the opposite side for a hiding-place, it sank down among the leaves and mud, head foremost, like an eel. The manner of its passing the winter was now evident, and as the evening was chilly, it had again sought the warmth of its muddy quarters.

A third inmate of this little pool excited my curiosity and interest more than either of the others. During the warm summer nights several large eels were constantly disporting among the soft mud, particularly after rain. Each had its corner of the pond, and they seldom invaded the other's territories. They were five in number; two rather larger than the others, one of them a yellowish green, the other a dark brown; indeed they were all of different hues, and the shade of their colour was my first distinguishing mark. This leads me to suppose that fish do not *always* take their colour from that of the water, or from the quality of the bottom. I know it is often the case, especially with trout; and I have seen fish caught on a mossy soil, nearly black, while those taken on a clear golden sand were bright yellow, though in the same loch.

But to return to my friends the eels. It was nothing uncommon to see several of them peeping out of a separate retreat in their own premises. The head of one, perhaps, from behind a decayed leaf—the whole body of another laid alongside a piece of stick, which it so nearly resembled as to be scarcely distinguishable. Indeed it required some practice to perceive them at all, and I have been nearly a minute before discovering one, though several were in sight. Having some curiosity to find out whether any more eels would get into this place should the original occupants be taken away, I, by means of a hook and strong gut-line, at different times pulled out the whole five. They took the bait readily, but it was rather difficult to hook them, as they held it for some time across their mouth without swallowing, after the manner of pike. I observed that these eels were more shy than those I had taken in lochs and rivers, but in excellent condition. They were never replaced, however, during the time that I had the opportunity of watching. The trout remained unmolested, and seemed also to thrive.

During sultry weather the eels often rested the lower part of their bodies on the mud, and raised their noses to the top of the water; when in this position they had a very serpent-like appearance, and might have been easily mistaken for snakes. I never saw this done by eels before; but, if noticed in the like attitude by a Loch Lomond sage, it might perhaps account for one of the three wonders ascribed to that water—viz., fish without fins, waves without wind, and a floating island.

THE MOOR-BURN.

I DON'T know whether the moor-burn more properly belongs to the Moor or the Loch; but, as it begins in the one and ends in the other, it was rather an omission on my part to have left it out in my first edition, especially as at certain times of the year it affords excellent sport to the angler who penetrates the wilds.

When in ordinary trim, the moor-burn is generally neglected by the finished adept, as a more fitting amusement for the schoolboy during his summer holidays; and certainly nothing can be easier than to kill a basketful of burn-trout at such a season. To do this in as short a time as possible, treat them with earth-worms baited upon a smallish hook. They will rise well at the fly, but the worm is more deadly. As you have often queer-looking places to scramble up, where a longer and smarter turn-out would be sadly in the way, use a coarse short rod, very small reel, and casting-line of good single gut. I have generally been most successful when the burn was small, the trout being then eager for worms, having tasted few since the last flood. The great point at such a time is to keep out of sight, by dropping the bait over a rock, or from behind a bush or tuft of heather. There is generally sufficient motion in these rocky streams to prevent your line from being seen by the trout, and they will seize the bait with such avidity that I have sometimes, when a boy, taken a dozen out of one pool or *linn*, as they are called. Many prefer the burn a little swollen, and in this state it is certainly easier for the unscientific craftsman, who is then much less likely to be observed by the trout. But if he took proper care to conceal himself, he would not only find them more greedy when the burn is small, but would be better able to detect their usual haunts, which they are very apt to leave when the water rises. When the linns are black, and whirl round in eddies, let the bait humour the water; in fact, the only art in fishing them is to make the worm appear naturally to follow the course of the stream. When, again, the burn flows over *level ground,* lengthen your line, as you have there more difficulty in keeping out of sight. Fish all the streams and deep-looking places; and, if need be, don't grudge to crawl to them on hand and knee, or you will often be detected by the quick-sighted trout when the water is clear. To fish the moor-burn in this way is capital practice for the novice in angling; with a little attention, he will seldom return with an empty creel. In the Balnaguard burn, which runs into the Tay near Logierait in Perthshire, I killed nine dozen and two in a few hours. I tried the burn by the advice of an old gardener, who told me he had one day killed nine dozen in it himself. So having equalled him, with two to spare, I washed my hands of bait-fishing during the rest of my sojourn on the banks of the Tay.

Of trout so caught, not above one in fifty averages a quarter of a pound. But there is another manner of fishing the deep linns and rocky eddies, which is difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, except for a steady head and practised hand. Yet if love of adventure should entice the angler to try it, he will be rewarded by larger trout, and perhaps a heavier creel.

In most of the small Highland burns, there is a succession of cataracts and pools, with a parapet of rock rising perpendicularly on each side, and often scarcely footing enough for a dog to pass. The greater proportion of picturesque-looking *brethren of the angle* would almost start at the idea of continuing their pastime under such disadvantages. They therefore make a circuit, and come down again upon the burn, where it is more easy to fish, and the ground less rugged. The trout in these places are thus left till many of them grow large, and each, taking possession of a favourite nook, drives all the smaller fry away. The difficulty of reaching these places is, I admit, often great, the angler sometimes having to scramble up on his hands and knees, covered with wet moss or gravel, and then to drag his fishing-rod after him. These linns should always be fished up-stream, otherwise, the moment you appear at the top of the waterfall or rock, the trout are very likely to see you, and slink into their hiding-place. The burn, however, must always be low, as at no other time can you distinguish the snug retreat of these tyrants—which indeed they often leave, during the slightest flood, in search of prey. By fishing up the stream, your head will be on a level with the different eddies and pools, as they successively present themselves, and the rest of your person will be out of sight. Hold the baited hook with the left hand, jerking out the rod, under-handed, with your right, so as to make the bait fall softly at the lower end of the pool. The trout always take their station either there or at the top where the water flows in, ready to pounce on worms, snails, slugs, &c., as they enter or leave the pool. Should a trout seize the bait, a little time may be given to allow it to gorge, which it will most likely do without much ceremony. If large, care must be taken to prevent it from getting to the top of the linn, which may probably harbour another expectant. The best plan is, if possible, to persuade it to descend into the pool below.[1] Having deposited the half-pounder in your creel, you will now crawl upon hands and knees, just as near the top of the linn as will enable you to drop the bait immediately below the bubbling foam—nearly as favourite a station for an over-grown monopolising trout as the other. Except in such situations, the burn-trout seldom exceeds a quarter of a pound, and may be pulled out with single gut, without much risk of breaking it. In these linns, however, I have frequently taken them upwards of a pound, which is easily accounted for. As soon as the trout grows to a sufficient size to intimidate his pigmy neighbours, he falls back into the best pool for feeding not occupied by a greater giant than himself; and as these linns are almost always in places very difficult of access, he remains undisturbed and alone, or with a single companion, driving all others away, until he may at last exceed a pound in weight.

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[1] In fishing a small pool, where you have reason to think the salmon have congregated, the same method ought to be adopted. When you hook one, tumble him over out of the pool down-stream ; at all events, prevent him, if you possibly can, from disturbing the throat, where there may be some more. If the fish are at all tractable when first hooked, several may in this way be taken out of the same pool ; whereas by fishing down-stream, should a salmon be hooked at the throat of the pool he will so frighten the others that very probably no more may rise.

I have seen two curious instances of the rapid growth of the burn-trout under such circumstances, from the size of a parr to fully half a pound. They were deposited in separate spring-wells, about three feet deep and five round. The trout in neither had any means of escape, and became so tame as to seize worms, minnows, &c., when dropped from the hand. One of them was within a hundred yards of Ardenconnell House in Dumbartonshire, where I then lived. It had been in the spring about four years, and although large-headed and lean-looking, as all over-grown burn-trout are, seemed in good health and *spirits*. It always came to the top of the water for the remains of my minnows, when I returned from trolling; and on one occasion I emptied a pailful of live ones into the spring, which not only gave it several hearty meals, but exercise and amusement to boot. It pursued and seized them with a rapidity the eye could scarcely follow. At last the poor minnows, from several dozen, decreased in number to three or four, who only escaped the fate of their companions by discovering a small crack between two stones; and I noticed that the trout soon ceased to molest them, having discovered that the attempt would be vain, as they always kept close to their refuge. This trout may be still alive; but the other, I have heard, is dead, after a solitary existence in the spring of nine years' duration.

But to return to the burn. Although when small or in ordinary trim the angler must be content with its common inmates, yet the time to fish it in perfection is during the floods at the end of summer and beginning of autumn. The sea-trout, salmon, and grilse then come up in great numbers. To select the proper moment for commencing operations is the main point. Many of the smaller burns remain in proper trim for so short a time that the angler ought to be waiting at the side, ready to begin fishing as soon as the white muddy water has run out, and the burn assumes the deep red tinge. After it decreases to a certain point, he will hardly raise a single fish. Nay, he would even stand a better chance *before* the water is sufficiently clear, with an enormous gaudy fly, with which, should he come half an hour too soon, he may amuse himself until it is time to put on the proper ones.

As I have already said, every experienced angler is well aware how capricious are the salmon, sea-trout, and grilse of different streams as to their flies. I was in the habit of fishing sea-trout of three burns in the same neighbourhood (two of them running into the same sea-loch), each of which had its favourite fly. I often put on the chosen three, and fished them all in turn; but invariably, when the water was in *its best state*, the fish in each were most constant to their own fly. I merely mention the fact without attempting to account for it, and will name the flies to show that the difference was considerable: one was a yellow and green, or red and green body, red hackle, and either teal or light-speckled mallard-wing; another a blue body, red hackle, and turkey-wing; and the third (for the burn which ran into a different loch) a green body, thread of gold tinsel, red hackle, and dark-mottled mallard-wing. The second-mentioned of these flies, with the addition of an orange tuft, is one of the best that can be used for spring and summer salmon on the Tweed, if the water is in its ordinary state; and by lessening the hook as the river decreases, you may continue to kill fish with it when the water is so small that they will not look at any other.[1]

As to the most killing flies for particular burns, it is impossible that any rule can be given; this is a point which one's own observation, or the information of adepts in the neighbourhood, alone can decide. But supposing them chosen, we will now proceed to throw them. If unacquainted with the burn, you should never pass over the streams, eddies, &c., when it first runs clear; and as it decreases in size pay most attention to the pools. If the " spate " or flood has not been very heavy, the fish will soon refuse to rise at all. It is then that a man who knows the water will often kill a fish or two, when perhaps an angler equally expert, but without this advantage, would stand little chance. I once in this way astonished a fellow-craftsman, no mean performer either. I was at the burn-side just at the proper moment, and having fished the best of the water, was about to return after killing a couple of fine sea-trout, when I saw a rival, with whom I was unacquainted, trotting down to the bank. His first salutation was, " Are the fish rising ? " He then desired to see my flies, being a stranger to the burn. As he seemed what is called " a *greedy* angler," I thought it no harm to take a *rise* out of *him.* The water by this time was long past its best; so, after supplying him with a fly, I said I would not interfere, but walk down and show him the casts. He was evidently a good fisher, but, as I anticipated, did not kill a fish, and only rose one. In the burn there was one very strong eddy, where the trout never rose to the fly, but where I seldom missed taking one with the worm, when the water was at all swollen. On coming near this place I said, if he had done nothing it was not his fault, but that I would now try my luck. I then let him go a good way ahead, took off my flies, put on a bait-hook and worm, and from this place pulled out two whitlings half-a-pound weight. I then whipped on my flies again, and overtook him at the end of the burn. I could hardly keep my gravity at his astonished face when I showed him my success. He never suspected the bait; and I soon took my leave, wishing him better sport the next spate!

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[1] The best turkey-feathers for the wings of salmon and sea-trout flies are those with the smallest spots,—very difficult to procure; and nothing can stand a comparison with the forked tail of the kite, when a red-brown wing is required for salmon.

Flies for salmon ought to be fastened to the gut in a different manner from any others—viz., with a small loop of double or triple gut, through which the length of gut is passed and tied with a double knot. You may thus fish always with good strong single gut, next the hook, cutting it off and making a fresh knot whenever it chafes at the shank. This method, of course, will not be very strenuously recommended at the fishing-tackle maker's, as, by the usual way, the fly is of no more use when the gut cracks or chafes close to the hook—which, unless double, or even triple, it will soon do.

Sea-trout, after the burn has run small, will never rise to the fly; they fall back to the pools, and, as anglers say, *stick to the bottom,* where they may often be seen. At such times they are also very unwilling to take a bait, and the only chance is to try both pools and streams with the minnow *after it becomes nearly dark.* I recollect once, when the water was quite dwindled, taking a very fine one with worm; but although I have often tried the same pools before and since, never with success. I had been fishing a small moor-loch in company with another angler, and thought of returning home by the burn, and trying the steep linns with bait for a sea-trout. My companion laughed at the idea, saying that to catch one then was totally out of the question. I thought the same, but having plenty of time, resolved to make the attempt; so, selecting one or two of the largest pools, where the rocks on each side rose perpendicularly, darkening the water, I gently and slowly let down the bait, allowing the worm but no part of the line to touch the water. After one or two attempts I hooked and killed a fine trout, fresh from the sea, and as white as silver. So small was the burn that he never even tried to get out of the pool, and my great difficulty was to scramble down the precipice in order to secure him. This trifling occurrence would not be worth mentioning, did it not serve to show that an angler always *has a chance,* however little he suspects it, if his energy and perseverance do not fail. Perhaps the following may be a still better instance of the efficacy of this latter qualification, when science and skill have been found unavailing. One of the fat lazy trout of the Thames, which I detected feeding near a lock above Henley Bridge, after refusing my artificial flies, a bleak and a minnow, I hooked at last with a common *bee* sunk like worm, which I had intended for a chub, and happened to think might take his fancy ![1]

Having named the noble Thames, I cannot let him pass without a tribute. I have had many an enchanting fishing-day on its banks, and if I cannot but prefer those waters to which early associations bind me, yet the pleasure of wandering along the green banks of the southern streams, as they sweep through the clovery meadow or the fringing copse, is perhaps increased by contrasting them with the grey rocks and purple hills of my country ; while the laugh of the woodpecker, the song of the nightingale, the " azure plume " of the little halcyon as he flits past on a calm summer's eve, are noticed with a more lively interest when substituted for the swoop of the eagle and the crow of the " gorcock."

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[1] The above examples are not related for imitation, as they would probably be unsuccessful ninety-nine times out of a hundred, but merely to enforce the advantage of patience—the angler's good genius.

LOCH-FISHING.

THE true angler is almost always a lover of nature; if not, he loses half the pleasure of his art. In following the river's course, he must of necessity pass through the finest and most varied scenery, and that, too, at a time when beauty crowns the year. But, enchanting as are the woodland banks of the quiet stream, there is to me a higher and yet more powerful charm in the solitary wildness or savage grandeur of the Highland loch. The very *stillness* of those bare hills and craggy summits, broken only by the rushing of some rapid burn that intersects them, has a tendency to elevate, while it calms the mind; and I envy not the man who could frequent such scenes and not feel them.

But if the proficient in the gentle craft has an eye equally keen to the beauties so lavishly scattered around him, it happens no less often that the admirer of nature's wildest charms fancies himself an angler. Our man of taste has perhaps fished a few rivers near him, in the spring, when trout are lean and hungry; and, having chosen a propitious day, has sometimes returned with a tolerable creelful. He then starts on his pleasure-tour, and of course his fishing-rod forms an important accompaniment. At first he makes some determined attacks upon the finny tribe; but being generally unsuccessful, his rod is laid aside, and, after having been delighted with the sublimities and beauties of half the

Highlands, he returns home with but an indifferent account of his piscatorial achievements. To such a one I particularly address the few simple directions in loch-fishing which time and patience have enabled me to collect.

There are particular times in every season when trout more readily take in many of the Highland lochs, and these it should be the angler's first study to discover. For instance, the best time for trolling with the minnow, in Loch Vennachar, is from the end of February to the middle of May, when large fish may be taken. They never rise well at the fly in this loch. In Loch Lomond, the trolling does not begin till May, and only lasts till the middle of June, when the fly-fishing commences. More may then be caught, but, with the exception of sea-trout, seldom nearly so large as with the minnow. In Loch Katrine you may troll with success all the season. The fishing in Lochs Earn, Lubnaig, and Voil is not good till May: the trout in these lochs being small, they are never trolled except for the gillaroo, which inhabits them all, and sometimes grows to a great size. The trouting in Loch Ard is best at an early part of the year, falling off very much as the season advances; while Lochs Chon and Dhu, not so good as Loch Ard at the beginning of it, are much better afterwards. In short, a number of the lochs in the Highlands may, at certain times, be either fly-fished or trolled with greater success. There are also some which may be fished either way throughout the season; the angler's judgment determining which, as wind, water, and sky suggest. These, if inhabited by pike, are my particular favourites, especially when the greater part of the shore is so clear of weeds as to make one independent of a boat.

Many people think a loch injured by pike: on the contrary, unless very numerous, as in Loch Menteith, I have seldom seen one much worth fishing without them—always excepting those where the Loch Awe trout or gillaroo are to be found. If a man prefers killing eight or nine dozen, with scarcely a half-pounder among them, to a dozen fine trout from half-a-pound to three pounds weight, then he may count the pike his enemy; but the latter feat will both better prove his skill and afford him much greater sport. He who wishes to excel in angling will leave the loch with its tiny multitude to the bungler, and select the other, where all his science will be called into play.

The reason why yellow trout are always large where there are pike is obvious: the small fry are all devoured by the latter, and the others, having more food, increase in size. A few years ago, Loch Katrine was chock-full of very small trout, which have gradually become larger since pike have been introduced; and now two or three dozen fine red trout may be taken in a day.

There are two other small lochs near Loch Katrine which breed very large pike, and are full of prime trout—Loch Arklet and Loch Drunkie—but they are less fortunate than their neighbours in not having been immortalised by our great Minstrel. The latter especially, from its ill-sounding name, we cannot wonder that a poet discards; but an angler will realise its attractions. The shores of these lochs being almost clear of weeds, and the ground firm, the best parts may be reached by wading, and fish may be taken from half-a-pound to three pounds weight. Upon one occasion, when playing a good-sized trout in Loch Drunkie, an enormous pike made several dashes, and at last succeeded in seizing it. I used every effort to frighten him away; but so determined was he, that, though I could see him quite plainly in shallow water, with my trout held across his tremendous jaws, he would not be beat off; and at last, when kicking the water I strained my line, he gave a plunge, broke my rod, and escaped with his prey.

FLY-FISHING.

The flies I have generally found best for loch-fishing are a light-speckled or brown-mottled mallard-wing, according to the day; reddish-brown mohair body, red hackle, and No. 7 hook, tied with yellow silk, for a trail; and a teal-wing, claret-colour mohair body, black hackle, and No. 6 hook, tied with orange or yellow silk for a bob. If the loch is full and muddy, add a small thread of silver tinsel to the latter, and increase the size of both: in large lochs a green body is also very killing. In fishing a loch where the trout are small, diminish the size of your hook; even in river-fishing, I seldom use any but those I have named, only much smaller and without the mohair—adding a hare's-ear body and woodcock-wing early in the season, and a mouse body and snipe-wing at a later period.

Should the loch you are fishing contain sea-trout or salmon, ascertain from any good fisher in the neighbourhood what are the most killing flies, and tie them for yourself. Should you not be "up to this," *beg, borrow, or buy them from him.* In fishing with a long line from a boat, let the trail be either a sea-trout or salmon fly; but if throwing from shore, never use the latter except by itself. When a salmon rises, whether in a loch or a river, you may allow him a second or two longer than a trout. He may be *safely* permitted to turn before you strike. A two-handed rod, large reel, with plenty of line, and the lightest tackle, are necessary.

If the wind is so high as to cause decided waves upon one of these small lochs, you will succeed much better with the minnow-tackle than the fly; indeed, the best plan then is to troll for pike, with a parr: they always take best in high wind, but are so capricious that you may have three runs in half an hour on one day, and perhaps not one in several apparently favourable days. High wind is prejudicial to fly-fishing in lochs where the trout are large, because it scatters them into unlikely places; and being, of course, much fewer in number than when small, you are not so apt to stumble upon them: the waves also prevent their seeing the fly so readily.

When there is a fine even breeze, immediately repair to the loch. Begin to fish those parts where the wind blows fairest from the shore; if you know the loch well, you have a great advantage. The trout have many feeding-places, and shift from one to another with the slightest change of the wind. Near some one of these they generally keep watching the breeze, which blows them flies and insects. They are usually in companies—so when the angler hooks one, he should endeavour to get it away from the rest; he will then most likely rise another the next throw or two. He must keep a very sharp look-out for these places, and may generally detect them by the rising of the trout. They sometimes, but not so often, feed singly.

When a fish takes the fly, raise your arm with a sort of *indescribable* turn of the wrist: if this is done with a *jerk,* the fly is whipped away from the trout; but if omitted altogether, it will often make its escape, after feeling the hook. It is for want of knack in this particular that so many trout are lost after having risen to the fly. When you hook a good fish that never shows above water, but swims low with a dead heavy pull, be very cautious; it is most likely tenderly hooked, and, with the least strain upon the line, will break away.

The shore, in many parts of the lochs, is fringed with weeds, beyond which you may cast by wading. Should you hook a trout in such a situation, and not find an opening to lead it through, use every endeavour to keep it from the weeds: and when quite tired out, raise its head above water, and tow it rapidly over them. If you can reach beyond the weeds with your landing-net, the difficulty in a great measure ceases.

When salmon or trout spring out of the water, you may be sure that neither will *be so apt to rise to your fly,* whether in lochs or rivers.

THE MINNOW-TACKLE.[1]

In fishing for trout with the minnow, I also prefer a moderate breeze, unless in bright sunshine, when more wind is necessary. Your tackle should be the very best single gut, dyed with strong tea, or anything to take the shine off; a No. 13 hook and two No. 8's tied back to back: two swivels are enough, and no lead on the line. Any one with the least knowledge of angling knows how to bait. The large hook enters the minnow's mouth and is brought out near the tail, which is curved in order to make it spin; one of the others is passed through its lips. A fly-top makes the minnow spin more lively, and is therefore preferable to a bait one: the rod-makers will say the reverse. In river-fishing, another branch and couple of small hooks fastened to the gut, and fixed in the minnow's side, are often used; but I do not recommend them for the lochs.

The best, though most tedious way of casting, is to gather the line with your right hand, and letting the minnow hang down about a yard, throw it out, shifting the rod at the same time from the left hand to the right: you can thus make further casts, and the minnow lasts twice as long. If the wind is high, try all the sheltered bays; you may then often hook a fish where you would otherwise have had little chance. Sink the minnow a few inches below the surface, and when you see or feel a bite, slacken your line a little: when you strike, it must be done with much more force than in fly-fishing.

When trolling from a boat, the less the breeze the longer the line: sink it with lead to a considerable depth. In baiting, use a No. 9 hook through the minnow's lips, and a 13 or 14 through the tail (*vide* cut). You thus bait much more

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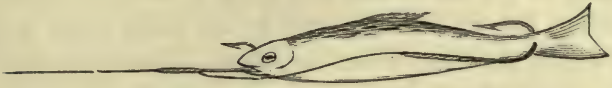
[1] It is very necessary to have wire-cages for small burn-trout, parr, and minnow. By sinking the cages in the nearest burn, leaving the tops above water for air, and feeding the live bait with small worms, they will thrive for months. If the cages are placed in a loch or any still water, they are apt to die; and if the cage-tops are not above water, they will be drowned for lack of air.

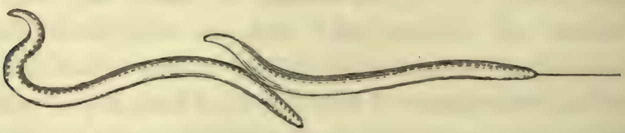


quickly, and the minnow's appearance is not so apt to be injured; its tail can also be curved up, more or less, to make it spin true. Thus baited, you may troll with it from a boat for half a day; but if you attempt to cast, it will very soon be thrown off. Always take with you two coarse trolling-rods that you do not mind sinking in the water, and very large reels with plenty of line—or oiled cord, if you wish.

Your boatman should be well acquainted with the ground; but if he is not, endeavour to troll between the shallow and the deep, where the trout are on the outlook. Find out if there are any sunk rocks or banks, and troll round them also. Always sweep past the mouths of any rivers or brooks; they are very likely places either with minnow or fly.

Troll as much as possible with the wind, although in fly-fishing it is best to row against it. Take care, when you hook a fish, that your boatman does not strain your line in the former case, nor slacken it in the latter; either of which he is apt to do, by lying upon his oars, watching your proceedings. You must, in fact, direct his slightest movement. When the waters are large and deep, such as Loch Lomond and Loch Awe, the heaviest trout and salmon are always taken by trolling with small trout, minnow, or parr.

If the loch is frequented by salmon, have one of your rods baited with a parr; and, if passing any of his haunts near the shore, take your fly-rod, land, and throw from it, but do not go near the place with the boat. Should no fish rise after you have thrown some time, take off your fly, put on a large bait-hook and two floats, one about six yards from the other; the line is thus prevented from dangling near the hook, which must hang down about four yards from the last float, baited with two large dew-worms in the following manner: Enter the hook at the tail of one, and bring it out about one-fourth of an inch below the head; pull up the worm upon the gut; then put in the hook about one-fourth of an inch below the head of the other, leaving the same length of worm at the point—this moves about, and entices the salmon; pull down the first worm to the other, and your hook is baited. (*Vide* cut.) When the float disappears, be in no hurry to strike till the fish has *tightened* the line; you are thus pretty sure of its head being turned away, and consequently have a better chance of hooking. This should only be attempted where the shores are deep and rocky, on a cloudy day, with a stiff breeze from the south or west, and skiffs of rain. Do not give up hope too soon, for the salmon are generally swimming in small shoals backwards and forwards along the shore; a little time may thus elapse before they pass where you are fishing.



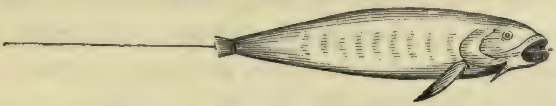
Should the weather unfortunately become too calm for day fishing, you may often hook a large cunning fish by waiting till dusk of evening, letting out a very long line, and sinking your rod in the water, with the butt against your shoulder. The biggest fish are always on the search for food at this time; and perhaps the most killing bait in calm clear weather is a loach—also excellent for large perch, some of which I have caught, when trolling, between two and three pounds weight.

TROLLING FOR PIKE.

The common way of rod-fishing for pike in the Highlands is with a running-bait—a parr, or small trout, and plenty of hooks, tied back to back on gimp, stuck all round it; also a couple of large swivels, and the line a little loaded with lead. They always take best mornings and evenings, except on very windy days; so, if the angler is inclined to try a cast for pike, after having filled his creel with trout, he may begin about six o'clock.

The Gorge-Troll.

Trolling with the gorge is often very deadly in weedy lochs, especially small openings that cannot be fished with the running-bait. I have seldom, however, seen it used in Scotland, except in a very clumsy way—a large double hook, armed upon wire, with the bait inverted, and no attempt to make it spin: unless pike are in a very hungry mood, this is not very enticing. The proper gorge-hook is a small double one, commonly used for eels, with very sharp barbs, slightly turned inwards; the shank loaded with lead, in order to make the bait sink quickly, and enable you to make far casts with precision. This hook is fastened by a small brass ring to about a foot of gimp (you require a baiting-needle): after cutting off the tail and all the fins but one of the top side ones, hook on the loop of the gimp to the needle, and insert it at the mouth of the bait, bringing it out at the middle of the fork of the tail; the lead and shank of the hook will thus be hid in the mouth and belly of the bait, and only the barbs and points be visible. Tie the tail to the gimp with thread. (*Vide* cut.) After casting, let the bait sink to the bottom,



then draw it to the top, and the single fin will make it spin beautifully. When a pike seizes, you must not be in hurry to strike, or you have small chance of hooking: let out your line with your hand; give him sufficient time to gorge the bait, and then he is fast and firm as you could wish. Use a coarse trolling-rod, with large strong rings, and reel of oiled cord: no swivel is required. Some use a large gaudy fly for pike; I never do so, and do not recommend it, though I have sometimes caught small pike even with a common trout-fly.

It is much more easy to find out the haunts of pike than those of trout. The best places are in and near the weedy bays. Fish all these with the running-bait, and, if possible, by wading, cast immediately beyond the weeds, between the shallow and the deep water; this, however, the sinking mud will often prevent your accomplishing. If you have found the pike on the feed, you may return over the same ground with the gorge, trying all the openings among the weeds that you could not fish with the running-bait. I never troll for pike from a boat unless they cannot be reached any other way.

SET-LINES AND TRIMMERS FOR PIKE.

Although rod-fishing for pike affords undoubtedly the best sport, and requires much greater skill, yet by far the most deadly way is with set-lines. This is either done with a long line, and from twelve to twenty hooks, or with single hooks, fixed to a bottle or other equally buoyant float, called a trimmer. I have also heard of tying baited hooks to the legs of geese, and turning them adrift: when a pike seizes the bait, the goose begins to flap its wings, and there is often considerable sport in the struggle; but it is certainly a most cruel diversion, especially if a large pike is hooked. The humane man will be more amused with the trimmer, which I have often practised with great success.

After very tightly corking up the bottles, and fastening the cord to them, let from two to eight feet hang down, according to the depth of the water; fix a large double pike-hook, armed upon brass wire, and baited with a small perch, trout, roach, or frog to each: be sure to cut off the perch's dorsal fin and lower part of the gills. The baits are inverted, the barbs of the hook projecting from their mouths. The best time for this amusement is on one of those delicious evenings with scarcely a breath of air, when the shadow of the mountain becomes more imposing on the unrippled loch, and twilight begins to steal over the scene. Let the hum of the beetle be your warning bell.

Having arranged all your tackle, and baited your hooks, place them *regularly* in a light two-oared boat, and row to the weedy bay. You will now drop them one by one, about twenty yards apart, outside the weeds, between the shallow and the deep.[1] The pike have been basking all the sultry day in the shallows, and are just emerging from their green covering in search of food. The first object that arrests their hungry eyes and craving stomachs is your tantalising bait, suspended at such a distance from the surface as to excite no apprehension, and as to be perfectly still. With avidity it is seized and pouched: down goes the bottle. Scarcely, perhaps, has it disappeared, when another follows its example: it is nothing uncommon to have four or five all bobbing up and down at the same time. The sport now begins, the angler stretching to his oars, first after one, then another, as they alternately rise and sink. If large pike are hooked, they will often keep their tormentor under water for a minute at a time; and *to run the whole down* is no contemptible evening's exercise.

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[1] Sometimes, when the water is unconfined, it is necessary to fasten the trimmers to prevent their floating away. Cut poles of about ten feet; fix a heavy stone, with a piece of twine longer than the depth of the water, to one end, and the trimmer with another piece of twine to the other end of the pole, which lies flat on the top of the water and prevents the fastening-line from dangling near the bait.

THE LONG-LINE FOR PIKE.

In setting a long-line for pike, fix branches of small whipcord to it, about a yard in length, and three yards apart from each other; the same hooks as described above appended to them, and baited in the same way. The line is set in a like situation to the floats, in the following manner: After driving a pole into the mud, fasten the end of your line to it. Your companion will now row leisurely along, whilst you lift out hook after hook, until you come to the end of the line; having done so, fix it to another pole, and drive this also into the mud. Do not make the line too "taut," or it will not hang low enough for the pike: no floats are required. The line may remain all night, and has thus the morning and evening chance.

EELS.

As lines for eels are of course set at the bottom, a short description of the way to do so may be necessary. Fasten a stone to the end of the line, to which also append a branch with a float—the same at the other end; the line thus lies flat upon the ground, the floats showing exactly where. Eels may be set for in rather deeper places than pike; but be sure there is a soft muddy bottom. Both hooks and baits must be a great deal less than when setting for pike, the former armed upon strong wire. Cut the fish, or whatever you bait with, into small pieces, just large enough to cover the hook, and fix them firmly on. I recollect catching five or six beautiful eels at one haul, with no other bait than two frogs; the legs set upon some of the hooks like worm, and the bodies, cut into several pieces, for the others. The drawing of an eel-line, what with twisting and slime, is often sorry work; if a large swivel was appended to each hook, it would both tend to prevent this and increase the chance of success. It is of little use to set single hooks for eels, as the great likelihood is that the first that comes may have a mouth too small for sucking in your hook, *but large enough to devour your bait;* in fact, there are twenty small for one large; and from a line of three dozen hooks, it is a very good night's work to kill half-a-dozen large eels.

I have thus given an outline of the different kinds of fishing in fresh-water lochs except perch, which *float and worm recreation,* as it has come under the ban of Dr Johnson, I might leave the novice to find out for himself. All he has to do is to ascertain their haunt, which any one in the vicinity can show; fasten a float to his line, and a No. 10 hook; bait with an earth-worm; throw in without art; and give the fish time to gorge the bait before striking, or it may slip out of its capacious mouth after being sucked in.

MOUNTAIN TARNS.

There are a number of little mountain tarns in the neighbourhood of Inverary, most of them well stocked. A chain of lochans, about eight miles over the hills, is well worth the fly-fisher's attention. I climbed to them, one balmy day, with my fly-trouting rod, and a few casts round my hat. The scenery from the tops of the hills did not much hit my fancy, although the views of Loch Fyne and the opposite glens no doubt are pleasing. It was a long dreary walk, with few objects of interest to shorten it, except the instinctive wiles of a moss-cheeper (meadow-pipit) and a merlin to decoy me from their respective nests. The pipit really deceived me at first, so completely did it sham a broken leg and wing. As for the little falcon, although I marked the very spot she rose from, all my ingenuity could not discover her young. She flew about, appearing quite unconcerned so long as I kept near this place; but when I walked away, she always pitched down, making a great fuss, as much as to say, "Keep off my nest:

here it is"—giving me a false direction as plainly as a bird could speak.

The first lochan of the chain, named Camisdown, lies much lower than the others, and is a good deal the largest. Some of the trout in it are eight or ten pounds weight. I only got one rise, and secured a fish of about a pound. There are few days in the year that they rise well in this loch, and bait is more acceptable than fly. The other little tarns are upon the tops of the hills. Two of them contain no fish, and look as if they were dead, when contrasted with the others—all alive from the continual rising of trout. In a few hours I filled my creel (a pretty large one), and might easily have stocked it again, as the day was good for the fly, and the fish keen.

THE WEEDY LOCH.

A fisherman in the neighbourhood gave me a strange account of a moss-hole—for it deserves no more dignified name—which breeds trout of twelve pounds weight. As the "weedy loch" was only half an hour's walk from Inverary, I took advantage of the first favourable day to give it a trial, both with fly and bait, for one of these monsters. I thought my guide was joking when he pointed to a shallow hole, no bigger than an English duck-pond, and so overgrown with water-plants that there were scarcely three square yards clear. After I had watched for a little time, a great break of the water, but slow and heavy, in the midst of the weeds, betokened the kind of customers I should have to deal with. The trolling-rod was quickly baited, but there was some difficulty in finding opening enough for the hook to sink. After shifting several times, for the great bubbles at the top of the water were still seen at distant intervals, I put on the most approved fly for the "weedy loch,"—viz., a red wing from the landrail's feather (a partridge-tail feather will do as well), and a green body. It was the strangest fishing I ever attempted, to pitch the fly at every open space, however small, and twitch back again without playing it an inch. Even thus, you were almost sure of a weed at each endeavour. I did hook a fish, however, and, thanks to the goodness of my tackle, landed him in spite of the weeds. It was the shortest, thickest, and most silvery yellow trout I ever brought to the bank of loch or river. Weight, two pounds and a half. Angus, my guide, told me that all the very large ones were caught with worm; but a dull, windy, showery day was indispensable, so none would look at mine.

I gave the trouts an hour's rest, and during this interval had an account of a Loch Fyne herring-fisher's life, from Angus, a frank athletic young man, the skipper and part owner of a boat. The fleet of scows, which are always hauled up high and dry to refit after the season is over, were all launching at present, and Angus meant to set sail in ten days. When shooting their nets, they had their choice of the best herrings to eat; for when they sold them "by the dizen,[1] the warst made up the coont, and fetched the same price as the best." In the creeks and lochs where they anchored, they could always get milk from the shepherds' shielings and bothies scattered along the banks, which milk from the little Highland cattle, grazed in the sheltered straths and glens, "was as rich as cream every drap o't." Some of the fishermen, he said, "*indulged in dirt;*" which luxury, however, he strictly prohibited in his boat.

It was now time to take to my rod again, and go over all the open places with the fly. Another trout actually rose and hooked at the same spot as the former one; but in straining to prevent his entanglement in the weeds, his hold broke. The "weedy loch" is a novelty to most anglers, and well worth a visit on that account.

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[1] Various sizes of herring frequent different lochs. They are called "skulls"; and the Loch Fyne skull is so much larger than the others that five hundred go to a cran, while seven hundred from Loch Long are required to make it.

FISHING ON SALT-WATER LOCHS.

The sea-loch has a character peculiarly its own,—no wooded islands—no green or pebbly margin, like its inland sister, except perhaps for a short time at full tide; and the dark mountain more often rises abruptly from its side in craggy and bold relief. It is a novel sight for the traveller, whom the refreshing evening breeze has tempted out of the neighbouring inn, at the landlord's recommendation, to try his fishing luck with such a clumsy rod and tackle as he had never dreamt of before. The awkward-looking herring "scows," well matched with their black or red sails, scudding in all directions; the nasal twang of the Gaelic, as they pass the bow or stern of his boat, shooting their nets; the hardy, weather-beaten face of the Highlander, always civil in his reply, and courteous in pointing out the most likely ground to the "stranger"—reiterating his injunctions (when his stock of English extends no further) "to keep on the *broo*," yet plainly showing that he expects the like courtesy in return, and that the least slip on your part would immediately make him change his tone,—all this can hardly fail to impress on the mind of the imaginative, that the spirit of the Highlands, though dormant, is not dead, and to carry back his fancy to the old times of clans, caterans, and claymores.[1]

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[1] It is often amusing to see how easily the warm blood will boil, even in those whom years and hardship might have cooled. The following characteristic in-

The fishing of the sea-loch is not nearly so scientific as that of the inland. The great art lies in being thoroughly acquainted with the best state of the tide for commencing operations—in having a perfect knowledge of the fishing-ground, and being able to set your long-line with neatness and despatch. Having lived for a couple of years on the banks of two sea-lochs, I had every opportunity (which I did not neglect) of practising the different kinds of fishing, and making myself master of the most propitious times of the tide for doing so with success.

TROLLING FOR SEA-TROUT

May be ranked at the head of this fishing; but, before attempting to describe it, I shall mention two curious facts relative to the sea-trout and salmon, which it is difficult to account for. One is, that the former will take greedily in one loch, while you may troll a whole day in its next neighbour, though full of them, without getting a single bite. This was precisely the case in the two lochs alluded to. The other, that although you may see the huge tails and back-fins

stances occur to me: A spruce young gentleman and party of friends, in crossing a ferry, had only one boatman, nearly eighty years old, tugging away at both oars. The young spark, who rather piqued himself upon his performance, offered to relieve him of one. "Na, na," says old Donald, whose manner was the extreme of respect, "ye'll no be accustomed to this wark." "Me!" says the youngster, "I'll row any man in your country." The Highlander instantly faced him with a look and tone of perfect equality,—"I've seen the day when ye wad hae been sair pushed!" The other case was that of an old "grannie" in defence of her rights and privileges: An efficient and benevolent magistrate, who had been very active in his endeavours to stop the progress of the cholera, was inculcating the necessity of cleanliness. Grannie listened with a sort of half-consenting air, which seemed to say—"we must submit to all this for the good that's to come"—until he mentioned the necessity of removing the dunghill from before the window. Her Highland blood could not endure so audacious an inroad upon her freedom: she determined to make a stand upon this odoriferous ground, proverbial for inspiring even the craven with pluck. With an attitude of defiance, and her fists firmly stuck in her sides, she bawled out—"'Deed, Major, ye may tak our *lives*, but ye'll no tak our *middens*!!"

of salmon rising all round, I never knew of one taking the bait; and during the whole of my trolling in the salt water, I have only killed one grilse. This is the more strange, as the salmon is not at all shy of the spinning-bait in the fresh-water loch. A fishing friend once remarked to me, "You are all wrong about salmon not taking a bait in salt water. I had one on for a long time, hooked in the sea." Shortly afterwards I landed, in the Gareloch, a sea-trout of seven pounds, and sent it to him. In course of post I had a note thanking me for the fine clean salmon! My reply was—"My dear Sheriff, never say you know a salmon *in* the water, when you don't know one *out of it!*"

The best time to begin fishing for sea-trout is at the turn of the tide, when it begins to ebb. The same rod and tackle as when trolling from a boat in fresh water will do. The herring-fry, salted, are the most killing bait (also excellent for large fish in fresh-water lochs), although minnows are very good; a sand-eel may also do, the black skin pulled over the head, so as to show nothing but the white body; this shines very bright, but, as it does not spin, is far less enticing than the others. A boatman who thoroughly knows the fishing-ground is indispensable, as it is much more difficult to find out than in the fresh water. Strong eddies, formed by the tide, are often good places; also any bays, especially if mountain burns run into them. The largest size of sea-trout are caught in this way; and when hooked, from the depth and *strength* of the water, make capital play. Large lythe, also, are frequently taken: these are like passionate boxers—fight furiously for a short time, after which they are quite helpless.

If there is a good pool at the mouth of any mountain burn, by going with your fly-rod during a "spate," or coming down of the water after heavy rain, *and when the tide is at the full,* you may have excellent sport. The trout are all floundering about, ready to take your fly the moment it touches the water. This only lasts for a short time, as they all leave the pool at the receding of the tide. I say nothing of sea-trout or salmon flies, which vary so much in the different lochs, rivers, and streams, that every angler should be able to dress them for himself. Any fishing-tackle maker will be happy to teach him *for a consideration.* He has then only to learn from an approved local hand what flies are best for the loch or stream he intends to fish, and tie them accordingly.

THE LONG-LINE.

The eel-line, already noticed, is precisely the long-line in miniature, with the exception of the hooks, which are such coarse, blunt-looking weapons, that the wonder is how they catch at all. They are sold for a mere trifle at any of the shops in the seaport towns, and tied on with a wax-end, but sometimes only with a knot of the twine itself: a turn of the wire on the shank enables you to do this. A baiting-basket is required—one end for the line, the other for the baited hooks, which are placed in regular rows. My line had only three hundred hooks, but some have double that number. Herring, cut into small pieces, are the best bait: I required about a dozen for one setting, provided I eked out with mussels; but eighteen or twenty were necessary if the line was baited exclusively with herring. Mussels, however, drop off the hook so easily, that when herring can be procured they are seldom used. Seeing the long-line baited, set, and drawn, will thoroughly teach any one who has an idea of fishing—*writing* how to do so never will. It generally took me about an hour and a half to bait mine; so I taught a boy, who, after two or three lessons, could bait as well as myself.

The best time to set the long-line is after low water, when the tide has flowed a little, and brought the fish with it. To know the different "hauls"[1] is most important, as your success in a great measure depends upon the selection of a good one. After the line is set, *it should be left exactly one hour;* and, if you have hit upon a shoal, you will most likely half fill the boat. I have several times killed about a dozen from twenty to thirty pounds weight, besides quantities of smaller. The fish for the most part taken are cod, ling, haddock, skate, large flounders, and enormous conger-eels, some of the latter more than half the length of your boat, and nearly as thick as a man's leg. These would generally be thrown back again, were it not for the havoc they make among the other fish, and the damage they do to the set-lines. Their throats are therefore cut as soon as they are pulled up, after which operation they will live for hours. The skate is also very tenacious of life; and nothing can be more absurd than the grotesque pompous faces it will continue to exhibit for some time after being deposited in the boat. The round shape of its jagged crown is exactly like a judge's wig; and when it puffs out its cheeks, the whole face and head so forcibly remind one of those learned lords, that you almost fancy you hear it pronouncing sentence upon the devoted congers. The conger, if dressed like other fish, is uneatable; but when the oil is taken out by parboiling, some people prefer it to cod. Care should be taken to untwist the line as much as possible when drawing it, which saves a deal of trouble afterwards. There is generally so much filth and discomfort in the whole business, that gentlemen seldom care to engage in it, except a few times from curiosity.[1]

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[1] Banks, and parts of the loch, where the shoals of fish congregate.

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[1] Thunder is generally believed to be destructive to fishing of all kinds—and so it often is. I, however, know an instance, when a friend of mine set his long-line just before a tremendous storm, which raged the whole hour it was in the water. As soon as it cleared, he rowed to his line, with no hope of success for that day: to his astonishment it was perfectly loaded with heavy fish. Something similar happened to myself, when going to fish the Almond, near Edinburgh. I was overtaken by a thunderstorm when close to the river: directly upon its subsiding I commenced fishing, and at the second or third throw hooked a fine trout. After a few hours I returned home, having had excellent sport.

THE HAND-LINE.

When a boy, I used to be much delighted with the hand-line, and never failed to practise it as opportunity offered. It is simply a piece of whalebone fastened crosswise to the line, and a hook at each end, tied upon strong gut, with a heavy lead in the centre. This lead sinks the line rapidly to the bottom, which it no sooner touches than you feel it strike. You are thus enabled to keep moving the hooks a yard or two up, and then sink them to the ground again, which entices the fish. All the art of the hand-line is to pull up *the instant* you feel a bite, and never to slacken (unless to play a large one) till the fish is safe in the boat. Keep changing your ground, and dropping your anchor, unless the fish seem taking. Mussels are the best bait; and it is a good plan to throw a few into the water, as well as the empty shells.

Hand-line fishing may be followed at any time, but it is best at the flow of the tide. As the water retires, shift your position further down the loch, and *vice versâ*. Almost every cottage on the banks can supply a hand-line, and every inmate knows how to use it.

THE WHITE FEATHER.

To some *highly facetious* authors, a pun upon the white feather might prove a prize, so I shall make them a present of it instead of my readers, and proceed to its dressing and use. Of all apologies for a fly, this is the clumsiest; it is only a swan's or goose's feather tied round a large and very coarse bait-hook, without the least pretence to art; any man who had never dressed a fly in his life would be as successful in the attempt as the most finished performer.[1] The rod and line are in perfect keeping with the fly; a bamboo-cane, or young hazel-tree, with ten or twelve yards of oiled cord, and a length or two of double or triple gut next the hook: no reel is used.

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[1] Worsted is occasionally used instead of the feather, and it is sometimes a killing way to have a different colour for *each* rod—viz., white for one, yellow for

The fish generally caught in this way are lythe and seithe, although mackerel will rise freely also: when fishing for the former, good double gut may be strong enough, but if large fish are expected, I should always recommend triple. Seithe take best in the morning and evening, and a slight breeze is rather an advantage: although the fly is sometimes sunk a little with lead, it is more often fished with at the top. You may begin at any state of the tide, and row over all the sunk banks and places where the fish frequent, at a slow rate, with three or four rods placed regularly in the stern of the boat. When a small seithe is hooked, pull it in at once, and out with the rod again as fast as possible: sometimes nearly all the rods have a fish at the same time. In lythe-fishing you need not launch your boat till low water: sink the fly with a couple of buck-shot, and troll on the brow, where it descends perpendicularly; this is easily seen at that state of the tide. When you hook a large fish, try to prevent it getting down, or you may be obliged to throw the rod overboard, in case the lythe should break away; but if you can manage to swing it about at the top for a short time, it will soon be unable to offer any resistance.

Trolling with the white feather has this recommendation, that it may be enjoyed by an invalid or party of ladies; and certainly a more delightful way of spending the cool of a summer evening cannot be imagined—rowing slowly along those

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another, and red for a third. This last is best for mackerel; and in some states of the water and sky, both lythe and seithe, especially the former, prefer the yellow to the white. It is a curious fact regarding the seithe, that when it grows old it changes both its nature and appearance: the colour is nearly black instead of the rich green; it grows to a great size, and gains a formidable set of teeth. It is then called a "stanlock," or "black salmon," and is quite as destructive to other fish as the conger-eel. In this stage it is never known to rise to the fly, but it is occasionully taken by the hand or long-line.

romantic shores, hearing the distant gurgle of the dwindled mountain brook in its steep descent, and ever and anon passing the blue curling smoke of a shepherd's or fisherman's grass-topped hut upon the banks.

SEA-LOCH FISHING.

When rivers are dwindled to a thread, and the fish of the fresh-water lochs have become lethargic from the fierce heat of the "dog-days," rejecting the most tempting lures, the sea-loch is in perfection. The spears are then sharpened, the hand-lines overhauled, and the red and white feather flies laid out for use. I am sorry to say that the long-line, a great favourite of mine in "days of yore," is now scarcely worth the trouble of setting, except in winter. Forty years ago my summer hauls in Loch Long comprised cod, ling, skate, gurnet, haddock, with many other additions; but for many years that loch has been nearly deserted. A few occasional fish have of late, however, been again attracted to the head of the loch by the tempting refuse of the Clyde having been there deposited.

On our coming first to the shores of Loch Fyne, the long-line was given a trial; but, after several settings, the few small rock-cod and haddocks that took the baits were nearly devoured by dog-fish before reaching the surface. These apologies for sharks continued their attacks even to the side of the boat, and a mangled remnant (sometimes only a head) was found adhering to the bait-hooks. The deep-sea fishing was therefore voted useless, except by hand-lines. The shallows, however, yield abundant amusement with the spear. The surface-feeders are of course lured by flies, white, red, or yellow, according to their mood. Of these methods of fishing the spear is certainly the most exciting, requiring the three qualities needful for excelling in all outdoor sports—viz., a quick eye, a steady hand, and a cool head.

Except by a keen eye, few flat-fish (the exact colour of the sand or mud on which they rest) will be discovered. If the hand is not true, they will be missed when seen, especially in six feet of water. Without good nerves, and their accompaniment, self-command, a man will be in such a flurry at sight of a fine fish, as often to be unfitted either to manage his skiff or to give proper directions to an assistant. There are as few good "spearsmen" as of those who excel in other sports; but any one having a tolerable hand and eye, with pretty strong nerves, may, *by practice*, become a good and successful "hand." Any one trying this amusement, I am persuaded, will either, *on failure*, give it up in disgust, or become an enthusiast. I have known my young friends on the moor, in the middle of grouse well scattered for evening shooting, rush down to the boats without a pang when they saw the loch near Otter Ferry in shining order. On coming home at night with a heavy grouse-bag, thirty to forty ground-fish were laid out in the hall, and the idea ridiculed that the amusement of the gun could equal that of the spear!

There are, however, comparatively very few days in a season when spearing is even practicable—far fewer when it is at its best. A slight ripple mars the sport, while it is ruined by a moderate breeze.

Under a cloudless sky and burning sun, with our best "hand" alone in his tiny skiff, it would be a strange exception if he reached the shore without a basket of choice fish. To give an ordinary day's specimen, the bag for one Saturday in 1865 was a dozen flounders and two plaice, respectively four and a half and five pounds weight. On that day the spearing lasted only from ten till one o'clock, when a stiff breeze sprang up, and of course the fishing ceased. The same expert "spear" has often landed from twenty to thirty flounders in a forenoon, several of them two or three pounds in weight. Large skate are sometimes detected basking on the deeper banks; but the spearsmen had to humour these powerful fellows, by allowing them to drag the coble until tired, when they floated quietly to the side of the boat, submitting to their fate.

Surface-fishing for "cuddies," as young seithe are called on the west coast (called "podlies" in the Firth of Forth), requires neither art nor science; but the associations are pleasant, for the sport is generally followed on a golden evening after a day of intense heat. The loch and its girdle of purple hills are then seen in the glow of their full beauty. Rowing from shore to shore, and along the banks fringed with green copses, there is continual change in the sunset lights and shadows. Then, again, the bow of the boat is turned to the shallows of the mid-loch near the Otter, where the busy throng is rising. The sun falls below the western hill, and the sport of the evening begins.

Five or six rods, with line and tackle strong enough to pull in a two or three pounder, are required; for though seithe above one pound are seldom hooked, there are larger fish, such as lythe or cod, which often rise keenly to the "cuddie fly." Seithe are a poor watery fish for the table, but lythe of a large size are much in request. We seldom took them above a pound in Loch Fyne, but I have captured some of seven or eight pounds in the "olden time" on Loch Long. In the Gareloch, too, when trolling for sea-trout, large lythe took my minnow or garvie constantly, giving good sport for a short time, but they never had the pluck or endurance of a sea-trout of equal size. In those days I always liked to fish both Loch Long and the Gareloch with a reel; but this caution is little needed on Loch Fyne.

We made a curious discovery in the autumn of 1877—viz., that seithe frequent fresh water. When trouting in Arrochar Burn, my son caught eighteen "cuddies" nearly 100 yards from the sea. The most experienced Loch Fyne fishermen would not believe it until they saw his basket. They were taken with brandling worm. As a set-off against seithe-poaching in fresh water, some of the finest fresh-water eels

I ever tasted were speared by my sons in the salt water of Loch Long.

Several years ago a Thames fisherman offered to take the eel-fishing of Loch Lomond for a good rent from my late brother. Though assured that he would make nothing of it, the man of enterprise stood to his proposal, and at the time of the yearly eel migration set his eel-pots in the Leven, the effluent of the loch. He was so well repaid that he was anxious to renew his lease, sending an enormous specimen as a proof of his success to Rossdhu. From his experience of the Thames, the eel-merchant knew well that the only road to the sea for the migrating fish was by the river Leven, and that he could secure them on their seaward voyage.

In my early days the loch was full of flounders, some of large size. They, too, leave the fresh for salt water at certain times; but since the pollution of the Leven by turkey-red dyers, the flounders disappeared, refusing to return by such an unsavoury route. Although char are to be found in most of the western lochs, there are none in Loch Lomond.

I mentioned before that when seithe grow old their nature is completely changed. They gain a formidable case of teeth, and are as fierce cannibals as any that infest those sea-lochs. When the white cloud of gulls, &c., come screaming and hovering over the herring-shoal, it is pretty certain that the dreaded "stanlocks," or "black salmon," as they are called, hang on the rear. Some of these monsters even attain the great weight of sixty or seventy pounds. The herring-fishers, by means of a hand-line of stout whip-cord and enormous hooks baited with herring, catch them often of that size. Unlike their silvery namesake, I make bold to say that a "black salmon kipper" would have little temptation to detain magistrates at breakfast when royalty arrives, to the prejudice of the city keys.

Good sport may sometimes be had with the smaller "stanlocks" by baiting with a piece of pork or small herring and trolling the ground they are known to haunt. The larger ones, however, refuse to come so near the surface, and only fish varying from six to fifteen pounds are taken by the troll. With a reel and line of oiled cord, a black salmon makes a run almost as exciting as a white one of the same weight.

Seithe swim in greater or smaller "skulls"; so, in going over a fleet of them, they are pulled into the boat as fast as the rods can be taken up. Of course the continuance of the "rises" depends on the size of shoal. The same sort of night being as good for the hand-line as the "cuddie-fishing," we generally preferred the former; but the last time we tried seithe nearly one hundred were brought into the boat, a dozen lythe, two rock-cod, and a mackerel.

Without giving an opinion on the vexed question of "trawling," let me say that I have listened to both sides of the argument ably stated by keen partisans. There is no doubt that all fish have decreased in the western sea-lochs since trawling has been legalised. Many proprietors of salmon and sea-trout streams which run into these lochs attribute also the falling off of their fisheries to the same cause. This last charge does not appear so clearly made out, as salmon and sea-trout never spawn in the sea, and there is reason enough for a decrease in these fish from the immense addition of network for salmon all round our coasts. The same may be said of the herring-fishery, as the great accession lately of drift-nets alone would account for a lessening in the herring-shoals, without taking note of the mischief done by the trawl.

Before trawl-nets were sanctioned by law, I have seen herring-fishers in the Kyles of Bute filling their boats to the gunwale by this means. Their companions, who were drying their nets on the shore, only laughed when I asked if they would like a free berth in the jail of Inverary. Of course, when the restriction was taken off the trawl-net, no fair fishing had a chance against it.

If often happens that whole boatloads of herring, unable to find conveyances to a market, are cast into the sea, to decay and spoil the fishing-ground. Others are caught quite unfit for use. These last feed as foully as cod, and when taken will not keep more than a few hours, though well salted. They are often netted in immense numbers, but of course are unsaleable. They are honoured by the title of "gut-pokes" by the fishermen. This distinguished epithet arises from their being provided with a bag which contains their food. When they cast the "poke" or bag, they improve in quality, but are not equal for a long time to those that "feed on the sea," as fishermen say. It is a curious fact that both sea-salmon, which are always in the finest order, and herring in the best condition, never have food in their inside.

In the Sound of Mull my son killed eighty "gut-poke" herring in one evening with the white feather fly, and they took it with even a keener zest than the "cuddies" in their best mood. The "skull" of very large and fat herring in Loch Fyne are not thought so good, either fresh or salted, as those of a medium size.

Deep fishing in the sea-lochs has the advantage over the shallows, that there is a chance of greater variety and better quality in the basket. But although different specimens of choice white fish may be taken at the same anchorage, particular kinds have their favourite banks on which they generally seek their food.

Near Balliemore House, my summer home in 1866, there was a bank for whiting, another for sea-perch, and a third for grey cod, besides several banks for "goldies," as they are called by fishermen. In good weather, on their particular banks, numbers of their own special kind of fish may be caught. Round Otter Ferry summer cod are sometimes brought up by hand-line, of pretty good weight; while the winter ones, both in Loch Fyne and Loch Goil, are even now of large size. In old times, the "whiting bank" half a mile below the boathouse was very valuable water. Every warm summer evening heavy creelfuls of the largest size of whiting were brought home, besides a good many cod from three to five pounds in weight. In those days any boat having ordinary success would in a few hours, with hand-lines, land enough fish to last a family for a week. Those times are long gone by, and a party of the same number would think themselves well repaid for their evening's work with four or five dozen fish. Our takes during the three years we rented Balliemore were thought very good for these degenerate days, the creel holding sometimes eighty, seldom less than fifty, white fish, in one small boat with two hand-lines. When, however, our two boats, moored to the same anchor, fished in company, the success was fully a third greater; and had they been independent, it would of course, in all likelihood, have been doubled.

The chief qualities for a hand-line are a fine touch and ready hand. When one of the boats is *manned* by ladies, and the other by men, both crews equally used to this line, it is generally found that the ladies beat their rivals both in numbers and weight of fish. This, no doubt, arises from their fingers being keener to feel, and quicker to strike, the least nibble at the bait. When a light wind arises, the difficulty of noticing the touch of a small bite is much increased; but during a fresh breeze nothing but the sharp tug of a pretty large one is at all likely to be felt.

The loneliness of one of these evenings, in its setting of matchless colouring in sky and sea and shore, united to a dash of savage life, has a witchery all its own.

As you row down to the banks, a fleet of "herring scows" appear riding at anchor. The fishermen have landed, and are gathered in picturesque groups on the rocks, listening to one of their number perched above his fellows reading a crumpled newspaper of ancient date. Suddenly there is a Gaelic shout, and a rush to the boats, which are manned as if by magic.

Away rows the fleet, a "look-out" man leaning against the mast, the creaking oars making for a distant movement of the waters. That well-known ruffle on the sea announces the welcome tidings—the herring-shoal is in sight!

On other nights, when a stiff breeze swells the canvas, and the craft flashes past with crowded sails, managed and steered with consummate skill by their pirate-looking crews, they always recall to me Byron's lines, addressed to larger ships, but not to more daring or truer seamen.

The hand-line, like white-feather fishing, is seldom good before sunset. As soon as the glare is off the glittering sea the fish begin to bite freely, and the tugs at the bait increase as twilight deepens, until it becomes too dark for the lure to be seen. In July good sport seldom begins before seven, and lasts till about half-past nine o'clock.

There is, however, much to interest the naturalist and terrify the novice (!) before it is time to put down the lines. The distant roaring and thumping behind that promontory are caused by a troop of porpoises. The larger are called "buckers," which snort and tumble in the water; the "pellochs," or smaller ones, spring several feet into the air, coming down with a thud on the sea which sounds like a blow from a sledge-hammer. Gradually they come round into sight, and swim nearer and nearer, continuing their gambols. The sea round them is "churned with white foam," and the "green hands" of our boats look uneasily to the shore. Before coming very close they sheer off for a distant bay. Our tyros, however, have scarcely congratulated themselves on their escape, when a detached couple of awful monsters, the size of Smithfield oxen, rise within twenty yards of our tiny vessel, and, giving ample proof of their bulk and strength, vanish again into the deep with a terrific grunt. In spite of the laughter of their associates, the novices steal many a furtive glance over the gunwale, lest these leviathans should reappear, and either upset the little skiff or tear it to the bottom.

The arctic whales of the Sound of Mull are often dangerous, but the smaller species that venture into the inland sea-lochs, called "black fish," are harmless, except when male and female are swimming in company. The male has then been known to attack boats. An experienced fisherman, who had fished Loch Fyne for forty years, told me that he was once anchored on the north side of the loch when a whale rose close to his starboard bow. This did not much annoy him, till another appeared about the same distance from the stern. Thus placed between Scylla and Charybdis, there was nothing for it but to wait patiently for the onslaught. To his great relief, however, first one sank, then the other, when he made for land at racing speed.

This same observant fisherman told us on our arrival at Balliemore that flat-fish spearing ended in October, as they all left the shallow for deep water. When October came, our best spearer brought home creels nearly as full as those in July. His keen eye soon saw that, instead of leaving the ground, the flounders only buried themselves in the mud except the head and eyes; so it only needed a sharper look-out on a very clear day to ensure success. The old man was thoroughly amazed when the spearing never fell off all winter. The 1st of January being very bright and frosty, the holiday board was graced by sixteen savoury flounders of large size, taken only a few hours before.

There was an excellent take of herring one night (July 29, 1862), but although the farmer before whose ground the shoal appeared offered the highest price, he could not induce the fishers to part with a single herring. They were all forwarded to the "coupers," to be salted for sale in the Greenock or Glasgow markets. The fishermen are afraid to offend these salesmen by parting with ever so small a quantity on their own account.

Two boats, headed by the Otter blacksmith, netted at the same time five hundred mackerel, which were also sent away by an express row-boat next morning.

Our own "catch" with two hand-lines was eighty white fish.

Some years ago there was a natural oyster-bed on the Otter Point, and in the bay at Balliemore. It has been nearly harried, however, I am sorry to say, by fishermen and others landing in boats from the opposite side, and carrying off the dainty molluscs in wholesale quantities. Nevertheless, at low tides, they are still scattered along the shores in considerable numbers. Our party often made raids on them, returning with sometimes ten or eleven to fifteen dozen of this residue. They were hidden in a sheltered creek, and to this depot we were indebted for many an oyster supper.

From the lack of resting rocks, but few seals are tempted to penetrate upper Loch Fyne. Their only regular haunt is at Minard Bay, about eight miles higher up the loch. The rocks exposed there at low tide give a good station for basking in the sun, according to their wont. They can then be approached easily with a rifle. Several of them have been shot there—one by a boy, the son of the proprietor of Minard. A very old male sometimes pays a visit to the bay at Balliemore, but his appearance is so rare and uncertain, and the coast so shallow, that it would be mere waste of time to watch his motions.

This same seal caused an amusing mistake on a certain New Year's night not a hundred years ago. Two sportsmen were shooting woodcock and ground-game amongst the furze bushes on the heights of Balliemore. They were tempted to prolong their sport till it was almost dark, when one returned by the high ground in order to leave the dogs at the kennel, while the other, followed by a gillie carrying the game, chose the path by the shore. In the bay close to the house a most unearthly screaming arose to the wintry sky. The gillie assured his principal that he well knew the voice of the seal, and that he was now at his mercy. As it was by this time quite dark, with no moon in the heavens, the struggling, howling object was easily stalked, and at last detected on the smooth water.

The gun was levelled, the report rang through the darkness, and when the glare of the flash had passed away, a creature of some sort was discerned floundering in the sea. As neither master nor gillie felt tempted to approach it, they ran to the house for a lantern. But at this crisis dark hints were thrown out concerning a certain functionary who had been keeping his holiday along the shore. Could he be the poor victim? With this uncomfortable suspicion in his mind, the shooter walked down with the lantern party, who were also joined by his afternoon's companion. On wading to their prey, instead of a dead man or dead seal, lay extended a fine specimen of a male heron!

This story suggests another, told by Scroop, of the witch killed by silver shot while riding through the air to the cairn on the top of Ben-y-Gloe. No one dared to go near the spot till morning light, when lying dead on the top of the cairn was found the body of a large blue heron.

A sea-loch, surrounded as it is by so much animal life on wave and "wind grieved" shore, is always a source of great interest to any one who cares for natural history. It is also of much advantage to every true sportsman when it bounds his shooting-quarters, as so often happens in the Western Highlands.

THE SCRINGE-NET.

All netting is poaching, not sporting: but this record of sea-loch fishing would not be complete without some notice of the scringe-net—perhaps the most picturesque among them all. The wild effect is heightened by its being only practised after nightfall, when advantage is always taken of quiet weather and an untroubled sea. My fishings in the Sound of Mull comprised two large bays—viz., Garmony and Scalastal, each having its complement of "shots" or clear places where the net can be dragged. At the turn of the tides, once a-month, the sea-trout rush up the sound in great numbers. Garmony Bay, the farthest, being best fished at high water, or, as they say, with a full tide, and Scalastal at half-tide, there is always time to reach the latter at the most propitious moment, after scringing Garmony.

It was on a September evening, when the harvest moon rose queen-like from a bank of clouds, that we left the snug tea-table for Scalastal Bay, distant only a few hundred yards from the house. In crossing the little grass-field which skirts the shore, knots of moor-plover were picking up the night-worms brought out by the heavy dew. They showed no alarm, although by the moonlight we distinctly saw them within a few yards, and heard their low murmur of content at the plentiful supply. The scream of the heron, disturbed from her night-feed by the fishermen, warned us that they were already shipping the net preparatory to a haul. A group of goblin figures on the beach were presided over by my manager, Sandy, who was summarily sending two farm lads home to their beds, as a punishment for keeping late hours in the morning. "Ou ay, plenty mens withoot them," says the old weaver, who always makes sure work of plural; thus deer are "deers," sheep "sheeps," &c. The yellow cheeks and meagre form of "Shemish Weaver" are strong enough warrant for his sedentary life. Who, therefore, could guess that this dried mummy was as hardy on the hills as a Highland stot; or that, in the coldest scringing-night, he was equally independent of salt water as a sea-otter?

In solitary dry-shod dignity, Sandy holds the rope on the shore, while the weaver carelessly pays it out of the boat with his left hand; with his right he directs the boatman, flourishing a huge pinch of snuff, with which he fortifies himself before beginning to toss out the net. Having been used to it from a boy, I rather plume myself on net-setting, but fairly succumb to old Shemish, whose smooth delivery and perfect semicircle of draught I always admire. In the present instance, from anxiety to cover the whole burn-mouth, he had miscalculated distance, and the last boat-rope did not reach the land. A few Gaelic grunts from the weaver, when Tom the shepherd, a fine young fellow of six feet two, with legs like stilts, jumps over the boat-side, nearly up to his armpits in water, and by a few sharp jerks gains rope-way enough to reach the shore. There was plenty strength at each rope-end, albeit some soft hands rather retarded than helped the drag. The corks come bobbing merrily in, as the circle narrows. "There's big fish in the net!" shouts Tom; "I see'd them brek." "Keep yer hands low, wull ye, and pull up the leeds," growls Sandy. "Be cashus, be cashus," shrieks Shemish, his apathy completely gone; "the net's full o' them." By a rapid smooth pull the bosom of the net is safely grounded, full of large and small fish, splashing, rattling, and flashing phosphoric light. Besides rock-cod, skate, flounders, and other salt-water fish, there were eighteen sea-trout, some of them four pounds weight. Three more hauls were taken, but less successful. There were, however, from eight to a dozen sea-trout in each. This was only an average night. A week earlier, no less than sixty trout were landed in Garmony Bay at one draught. No salmon were taken the whole season.

I seldom cared to join this sport myself, but my boys shared both its fatigues and pleasures every time the net was out. Often, as the season advanced, the nights growing darker and the winds higher, we watched for their return till two or three in the morning, and could not forget that on those wild seas and crossing tides many a boat has been watched for that returned no more.

I have now, I think, given all the *necessary* instructions in fresh-water and sea-loch fishing; and feel confident that, by following them, the admirer of "flood and fell," even if a beginner in angling, may return from his fishing tour, having as often filled his creel from their depths as gratified his taste with their scenery.

A RAID ON SUTHERLAND.

THERE are yet some blue spots in the darkening horizon of old Scotia's fishing sport, and the county of Sutherland still holds its own in the variety of its angling capabilities. By the permission and kind assistance of the late Duke of Sutherland, I enjoyed the luxury of exploring these romantic wilds, and found the excitement of success in good keeping with the scenes which so often afford it.

I was fresh from an English school when I first saw Sutherland; but what changes have these intervening years wrought on this remote and primitive land! So far as I remember there were then no white-faced sheep, and the moors and mountains were grazed by the old-fashioned black-faces, interspersed with groups of "black cattle," the picturesque hirsel of the glens.

The savage precipices had tenfold interest as the constant haunts of golden eagles or peregrine falcons, while most of the sea-cliffs or lonely mountain-tarns were associated with eyries of the erne or the osprey.

The rank and luxuriant heather had not then been consumed to accommodate the vast flocks of Cheviots; the grouse were regularly distributed and healthy; while old deer with noble heads were far more common than in these modern days of cost and preservation, when numbers are made to atone for lack of size and high bearing.

The so-called vermin have disappeared, and no wonder. Like Indian scalps, a bribe was paid down by the shooting tenants for the head of each winged or footed creature of prey; and as this blood-money graduated in value from the nobler to the meaner birds or animals, of course the skill and cupidity of the keepers were chiefly directed to those magnificent specimens long ago driven to remote Highland tracts, but now in a fair way of being extirpated altogether.

The "iron road" ended at Bonar Bridge, on the confines of Sutherland, when I last visited that country; so in order to penetrate the lonesome straths and mountain-roads of this sheep and deer grazed province, my son and I hired a neat little waggonette from Ardgay.

After baiting at Lairg, the first day's drive brought us to Altnaharrow at half-past seven in the evening. The inn was exactly in the same state of cleanliness, order, and comfort as on my last visit; and my old acquaintance, Harry Munro, the landlord, as civil and obliging as ever.

A course of fine weather had dried up the streams, but as there was some dead water at the foot of the feeding-burn of Loch Naver, my son borrowed Harry's nondescript rod to try for any stray loch-trout that might be feeding in this estuary, in defiance of the remonstrances of Harry's farm man, who insisted that the "flees were ower sma'." The fisher, however, selected three to suit his own fancy, and by half-past nine landed twenty loch-trout—amply sufficient for a supper that night, for a remove before the excellent roast-beef of our next day (Sunday) dinner, and for an adjunct to Monday's breakfast before leaving for Durness. When our trap was packing, Harry quietly stepped up to me and asked, "What flees the young gentleman fished wi', as he had never seen so mony troots ta'en oot o' that bit water before."

Our driver, besides being a very intelligent lad, had been employed in various capacities all over the county. With great precision he pointed out the marches, described the shooting-beats and their tenants, knew the different proprietors, as well as the names of most of the hill-lochs or mountain-streams. From constant yearly report of the different shooting and fishing bags, he had also formed a pretty shrewd guess of the sporting capabilities of the land and water we skirted, as well as of the sporting skill of those who rented it. This forenoon he was more than usually demonstrative at a fox's cairn close to the road. A few years back he had been a hind on this farm, and had assisted at the night-watches for reynard among these rocks, which, he assured us, were catacombed for a hundred yards along the mountain-face. A short distance before, he pointed out a precipice where his master the farmer ("who had ower muckle whusky") had been pitched over with his gig. The horse and gig were dashed to pieces, but the farmer was miraculously thrown forward on a green mound, and escaped with a slight bruise.

The bold rocks about half-way between Durness and "the Cape" (Wrath) had attracted us to this wild coast. They are the favoured resort of myriads of sea-birds, including the white-tailed eagle. "If ye had been here last week it wad hae been grand," said the weather-beaten coastman; "but we daurna ventur in this easterly swell."

The cold dull "haar" seemed fairly set in, as there was no change in the night, so we drove down a distance of twenty miles to Scourie, where the island of Handa, with its beetling cliffs, attracts the same description of sea-fowl as the rocks below Durness.

Although the swell on the outward and exposed rocks of Handa would prevent our skirting them unless the wind changed, still the old fisherman, Macleod, assured us that the sheltered creek and bays between Handa and the mainland often attracted curious sea-birds. The old man was familiar with the commoner sorts, had sometimes noticed stormy-petrels there, and casually mentioned what he called "sea-pigeons." We at first thought he meant rock-doves; but the bird he meant had red feet, *a red bill*, and dived. Its colour also was black, with a white patch on the wing. The black guillemot, thought I; but then the red bill. "Are you sure of the colour of the bill?" He passed his word that it was bright as vermilion.

To secure this red-bill I eagerly ordered his boat to be ready at nine next morning. "What can that bird be?" I said so often during the evening, that my son compared my curiosity to that of the old Caithness laird, who never could rest without knowing everything about everybody. When travelling north with a friend, he stayed the night at a small inn. "Ye'll be frae Caithness?" says he to the maid-of-all-work. "No," rather curtly. "Frae Sutherland, then?" "No," a little sulkily. "Ou, I hae't; ye're frae Ross-shire?" "No," still. "Ye maun be frae the Mearns, then?" The "No" was nearly smothered by the slamming of the door. All the evening the laird was thoughtful and abstracted, and when he took his candle to go to bed, made the earnest appeal to his companion—"Whaur can that lassie be frae?"

Macleod honestly told us that the sea-eagle had not built on Handa last season, nor this, so far as he knew. He gave their correct titles to the common guillemots, razor-bills, puffins, cormorants green and black, &c., and was only a little confused about the gulls. What, then, could this sea-pigeon be? If I could only get him to give way on the carnation beak—but catch him!

The breeze had lulled, but it was still from the east. The two boatmen, therefore, were yet unable to say whether we could round the outer rocks of Handa until they cleared the farthest mainland cape. They then began to shake their heads,—"There was ower great a swell to gang within shot o' the cliffs, but we might try the land-locked creek and bays first, an' maybe it wad moderate by the evenin'." The calm water, too, was best for "sea-pigeons" and stormy-petrels.

With slow pull the men crept along the coast, while, on rounding each peak into a fresh bay, Macleod protested he had never "gaen ower sae muckle water" without spying the mysterious red-bill. At length my son asked for the telescope, and on returning it, carelessly remarked, "There are a couple of black guillemots." Macleod was alive in a moment —"That's the sea-pigeon." To satisfy him we rowed towards the birds. One rose out of reach, and the other (a very distant shot) was dropped by the No. 4, its bill, to our boatman's chagrin, black as ebony! Unlike many of his superiors in birth and culture, this poor Highlander's radiant freak of fancy was, I am convinced, neither premeditated nor wilful.

As the surf, in place of abating, was coming in stronger, we gave up all hope of circling the island. A landing on it was easily made, and we proceeded to the erne's rock. The alarm shot only brought out some rock-birds, but the eagle, as Macleod suspected, had forsaken her eyrie.[1] Within shot were tier on tier, and rank on rank, of razor-bills, guillemots, coulter-nebs, ranged like the defenders of a beleaguered fortress. The crest of one stack of detached rock rising abruptly from old ocean had never been trodden by human foot. Sunning themselves on this turf, a colony of great black-backed gulls lay, or rolled about, in heedless, conscious security. On the sides were thousands of cliff-birds so shockingly tame that I desired Macleod to pitch a few stones to try to enliven the dormant mass. At the second throw he killed one, which dropped into the yawning abyss, while only a few of its nearest neighbours deigned to leave their perch. On looking into the awful chasm, we distinctly perceived the large green single egg on several of the ledges, but only one *pair* of eggs, and these were half the size of the others, and whitish-coloured.

As we already possessed all the specimens we noticed on and around Handa, the sail was soon hoisted for Scourie, and in the afternoon and evening a rugged drive through the mountains to Inchnadamff completed a thoroughly enjoyable day.

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[1] I am happy, however, to record that the erne hatched and reared her young in the spring of 1877 on her Handa rock.

We had come to Tongue on Thursday, the sacramental fast; and Friday being "the Men's day," Mr H., the superintendent, gave us a hint that perhaps the keeper might have some qualms about attending us to the lochs. In Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, and part of Inverness-shire, these nondescript beings called "the Men," constitute themselves judges of their ministers. When they set their baleful mark on any clergyman, the people refuse to attend his services. They seem a lingering remnant of Popery and superstition in the Highlands, having a separate department of their own, answering a little to some of the lay orders of monkish times. We must, however, do the old friars the justice to remember that, ignorant though they were, they were rather in advance of their own day; while these authorities, even in this penny-reading age, have about as much general knowledge as they have divinity. On the death of George III., the leading "Man" of Caithness, when asked by his followers, "Fa was to be king noo ?" oracularly answered, "Fa suld be king but oor ain Sir Shon !"[1] If old Ross, the keeper, felt disappointment at being deprived of the services of such sages, I certainly could not detect it in his paradoxical countenance, where mirth and seriousness seemed to struggle with doubtful result. To try him, we offered to witness "the Men's" performance ourselves. The right chord was touched; gravity conquered; and Ross, for all but the camlet, might have been a "Man" himself. A few questions about the lochs, however, soon altered the case, and waggery prevailed again.

The tent was pitched in a secluded spot, beside a little brook among the hills. A large primitive congregation surrounded the young Highland minister, who, with violent gesture and defiant tone, was fiercely shouting a Gaelic exhortation. Before him sat "the Men," in full camlet canonicals. Only two had the cotton hood; the rest wore red or brown scratch-wigs, which so enhanced their natural or assumed gravity, as to be perfectly grotesque. They were considerably above middle age, though not very old. The most prominent was the best specimen. He concluded with a prayer in a low tone, and was really a prepossessing old man. His neighbour on the right was a truculent fellow, whose red swollen face too plainly intimated that neat whisky was the spirit that oftenest moved him; while he on the left, with a fiery-red wig and sharp-cut features, had that sinister expression of sly cunning, so especially repulsive, and most frequently found among the lower orders. They appeared to sit in judgment on the preacher; and you could almost read in their critical faces that they thought him "a fine lad, if he had exparience." The women were mostly dressed in cloak, hood, and coif, which added to the simple effect of the whole; and when the nasal Gaelic psalm rose from the heathery brae, it was, barring "the Men," almost sublime. After the congregation broke up and the three ministers descended from the tent, they, like good schoolboys, sheepishly shook hands with all their masters, "the Men," in turn.

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[1] The late Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster.

None of the ministers under "the Men's" surveillance wear either gown or bands. Popish vestiges themselves, they call the gown and bands Popish in a minister, and are jealous, I suppose, of this infringement on the prerogative of camlet and scratch-wig! A northern presentee to a church took his revenge on going South, by mounting bands as a flag of triumph, and never doffing them till he reached the end of his journey at Dunkeld. Another less fortunate aspirant for bands supplied their place at the "trial" sermon, by pinning his Crimean medal outside his gown, to enlist the sympathy of his audience. That the bands had some mysterious power, a late Free Church professor fully proved, and fairly owned: for, when preaching in the Isle of May, seeing the lighthouse-keeper's wife completely overcome, he asked what part of the discourse had touched her feelings. "It's the baands, sir—it's the baands; I haena seen them sin' I was a lassie." Publish it not in the North—tell it not to "the Men"![1]

The morning broke out fine and clear after a thick mist. "The Men," amidst admiring groups, were solemnly stalking to their homes in the distant straths or mountain-sides; and we, guided by Ross, wearing his merry face and a shooting-coat of portentous pouches, were wending our way to the lochs. The landlord at Altnaharrow had obligingly sent over a small coble, but the lochs were at their lowest, consequently very difficult to troll. There is only one state I consider worse—viz., when too large. You may then succeed with fly-trout and very small feroxes, but until the loch falls in considerably, the only ones worth hooking seem glued to the bottom.

Lochs Slam, Craggie, and Layghal are all connected by a pretty large moor-burn, so the salmo-ferox inhabits the three. It is very seldom any are taken in Loch Slam, and only now and then in Loch Craggie; while Loch Layghal, from its greater size, is their chosen home. Loch Slam, however, has the first run of the salmon after a flood of the Borgie, and for a day or two there is a fine chance of hooking one, but they soon find the burn flowing out of Loch Craggie, when they all penetrate into that loch. Unless, therefore, you are so fortunate as to hit on the shoal on their first rush up the river into the loch from the sea, you may not stir a fish. I had once the good hap to light on these fresh-run salmon, and rose three—fixing one, which (as I had only good trouting single gut, and dared not check him) twice ran out two-thirds of my 100 yards reel-line. The sight of him rolling on the top of the water at such long distance certainly tried the nerves! His strength failed after these boring bursts, and I soon had him under command of a short line, when he played beautifully. He was a lovely-shaped salmon of 11½ lb., with the sea-lice on him.

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[1] In the summer of 1879, when revisiting Sutherland, I made the acquaintance of a "Man" of the straitest sect of "the Men"—a very Pharisee of the Pharisees. His appreciation of character, however, in some respects would hardly coincide with his other narrow-minded views. For instance, in speaking of a certain highly born dame of a past generation, he remarked, "Och, she was a godly leddy, the Countess; three-an'-twenty pints o' Glenlivat she gave to the gillies whan she cam' here, an' they were that pleased, they unyoked her horses an' drave the coach themsels!" Some of us perhaps might have preferred some other proof of the good Countess's piety.

If the fly-trout are on the feed, Loch Slam always produces better-conditioned ones than the other two lochs—often from three-quarters to a pound weight. I have been told that since my trip to Sutherland in 1875, a wire-netting has been fixed across the mouth of Loch Craggie burn, which will stop the salmon from penetrating into Lochs Craggie and Layghal, and by this means make Loch Slam a valuable fishing water.

The salmo-feroxes of these three lochs are scarcely equal to those of Loch Assynt at the other end of the county; while the Loch Shin trout taken by the troll are decidedly inferior to all these lochs—on which account I never took the trouble to fish it. The biggest ferox captured by us on Loch Layghal was secured by the worst-baited hook we ever insulted them with. Having used up all the best live bait, there only remained one or two small things quite unfit for trolling. I had landed at the Shepherd's brook for a fresh supply, while my son put on a couple of these tiny trout with scarcely an attempt to make them spin. Very soon this large ferox dashed at the clumsy lure, and, after a wicked struggle, was persuaded into the landing-net, and proved a large-headed, ill-shaped monster of 14 lb. The next largest we landed was a perfect contrast to the above—viz., a beautiful specimen of 11½ lb., and in the finest order, on which account my son, who caught him, had him preserved for our collection. On the other days when we trolled this loch, our bag generally contained from two to three feroxes, of from 5 to 8 lb.

One of the days we landed on the island; and I shall not easily forget it. A sky of unbroken sunshine was reflected in the calm bright loch; and the bracken, the harebell, and the wild hyacinth, growing in rank luxuriance, fragrant and beautiful, made the little islet look like a sparkling gem in its setting of silver. Warned by the colony of lesser black-backed gulls, the whole fleet of geese had sailed out from the island, and were riding at anchor about a mile off. There seemed upwards of a hundred, and with the telescope I plainly saw a good many goslings. Four of these bean-geese have been reared from the egg at the inn. Every morning they strutted past with drowsy cackle, pompously guarding their solitary gosling. They cracked and chewed oat-cake or biscuit voraciously. By getting plenty of food without the trouble of seeking it, the enlarged power of digestion has so increased the size of their bodies that the wings are too weak to carry them. As Professor Lowe pithily says, they remain "captives without a chain."

Only one couple of the greater black-backed or giant gull haunted Loch Layghal. They were easily distinguished by their size and more sulky trumpet. This pair always met our boat half-way down the loch, but the lesser ones seldom noticed us unless we approached the islet. Ross's "boy," who attended us on that day, was a fine active young fellow of two-and-twenty, with a keen eye for a deer, or any other shy creature; and I may say for his father,[1] that it was quite refreshing to meet with a man who had taught himself so much of the practical part of natural history. His very errors are sharp ones; for instance, when we saw a common sandpiper, he told me they all passed the winter in flocks on the sea-shore. This mistake was very natural: he perceived that the summer snipes all left in winter, and also that the dunlins returned in larger trips at that season to the coast; he had therefore concluded that they were one and the same bird. We were both sorry to part with this kind old man. The last we saw of him was sitting watching our skiff from a rock until a headland suddenly intercepted the view.

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[1] Robert Ross died in the spring of 1876. On one of my last trips to Sutherland I called on him, when he pathetically said, "I wad like weel, Mr Colquhoun, to creep to the lochs and see you fish aince mair." His youngest brother John has always been my fishing-guide since Robert was laid on the shelf, and a better could not have been found.

In walking up the steep brae near Loch Layghal, we were admiring the most natural scarecrow that ever defended a corn or potato field. It had two leaning staffs, a tattered hat, ragged coat and trousers, and a most imposing still-life attitude. "How natural!" I muttered to myself. Ross's ear was quick, "Oh, sir, you'd be astonished to see some of them here. They make them far more nat'ral than that." Scarcely was this unlucky assertion hazarded, when the scarecrow, which, like the Irish recruit, no doubt "stood up in the centre of its best wardrobe," began to walk. Ross looked extremely queer, and we moved quicker on. Upon a sandbank in the middle of Loch Layghal a solitary bird was resting. "What's that?"—"A gull, sir." "Are you sure?"—"Oh yes, it's one o' them gulls." I was fixing my telescope, when the gull spread wing, and proved herself—"An osprey," shouted I;—"An aigle," cries Ross in the same breath. These ornaments of the Highland lochs are now so rare, that Ross might well be excused for his careless look. Only a stray one at distant intervals appears on this loch, and the Duke has given strict orders to spare both them and the other eagles. Pity his Grace has so few imitators.

A rare type of *sui generis* was our amphibious coachman, Hector Gordon, of Altnaharrow. He thoroughly knew all the lochs and cross-roads for miles round, land or water being equally his element. He was at first a little shy, but when we gained his confidence, he seldom opened his mouth without saying something pungent, in a style peculiarly his own. Yet he had no idea of it himself. His face was as unmoved when we were in fits of laughter as before he had uttered a word.

A more good-natured expression never set off very plain features. His dot of a nose had been so sunburnt the first day by wearing a Glengarry, that he appeared the second with a wide-awake grotesquely looped down to shade his nostrils. "The sun's got hould of your nose, and ears too, sir; mine's quite roasted; I micht ait it whan I laike." Seeing him tie something round a cork, I asked what it was. "Trumps, sir (the Jew's harp); a pair o' them makes very pretty music when they's well played." On telling this to the landlord, he assured me they were very musical at Scourie, "whaur Hector cam' frae." Our other boatman had been unwell, and Hector gave for explanation: "I was thinkin' what was the matter wi' him; he drank some ale and whisky in the morning *thegither;* one of them's best alane." Then, for fear of being unjust to the ale and whisky, he added, "And the worst o't was the cauld water on the tap o't." There was a poor maniac of Ross-shire, whom Hector affirmed fed for seven years on grass with the deer. "She was covered wi' lang hair, and could run as fast as themsels." He knew a very old woman in Tongue who remembered her, and "she was very wild when first catched."

Under Hector's pilotage we trolled Loch Naver. A five-pound trout, three two-pounders—in size, shape, and colour exactly alike—and several near a pound, were the day's produce. The large one was ill-shaped and ugly; all the rest handsome trout. We saw nothing of the salmo-ferox in Loch Naver, but this was the only day we tried it.

Going out in haste, we asked Hector to get the landlord to direct a paper: "He can't read a word; no, nor yet write." After a pause: "Nor spall aither." And yet the schoolmaster was not far away, for we passed a bothy on the banks of the loch, made entirely of turf, with a little window, a rustic chair of state for the master, and stones for the scholars to sit on. This extempore schoolhouse was private property, being put up by a keeper of the tenant of the shootings, and the manager of the adjoining sheep-farm, for their respective large families. When I inquired whether this *al fresco* school was now in use: " No, sir; the schoolmaister's clippin' " (shearing sheep).

At four in the morning we left Altnaharrow for Lairg, where we had secured places in the post-gig for Assynt.

At Lairg, when with great assiduity Hector was fixing our luggage in the post's gig, my young companion asked him " Where his sweetheart lived ?" He doubted if she was born: " Ere she'll be ripe, I'll be rotten, I daursay." Giving utterance to this bachelor foreboding, and with a kindly smile on his quaint features, Hector Gordon doffed his Glengarry and waved a mountain farewell. This amusing and plucky young fellow, however, had a sweetheart, whom he married. He settled in a village on " The Kyles," and became the most daring and successful fisherman of the district. In his eagerness to supply the market, one stormy morning he put out to sea, his boat was swamped, and he together with his comrade was drowned.

The drive from Lairg to Inchnadamff in Assynt was very sultry. Leaning over a rustic bridge, in the heat of the day, was a fat respectable English keeper. He had just arrived, and I thought looked despondingly at the steep frowning hills. Poor fellow! his red face and well-fed contour seemed ill fitted to contend with more trying ground than the turnip and stubble fields, of which he was likely musing. Our driver thought the same, for, with an unmistakable sneer, he averred, " He's grand at feeding the dowgs." We came through a fine sporting country, but heard only complaints of the deplorable state of young grouse from the long drought, and that the rivers had been useless for weeks.

Near the top of an Assynt mountain we encountered a delightfully patriarchal " flitting." As the steep road was also narrow, our driver had to pull up in order to let the caravan pass, so we had full time to admire its simple order and discipline. First came two sons, each guiding a shaggy pony and light cart loaded with beds and furniture; then one of the daughters leading the milch cow. Next came her sister, skilfully driving four sheep with the aid of their two collies. The hale mother now trudged forward with a hen in her apron. Lastly followed the patriarch, like Jacob, with staff in hand, and at a sufficient distance behind the procession to give him a good view of the whole. There could not be a more contented or healthy-looking family ; and the stately father, with his ruddy face browned by the mountain blasts, was a noble type of the Highland shepherd.

The district of Assynt is unrivalled for loch-fishing. It is full of lakes, with variety of fishing to tempt all tastes; tarns teeming with yellow trout to suit *impatient* fishermen,—and ladies, it would seem—for we actually saw two equipped with little shining fly-rods, ready to fill the creels, which no doubt they did. A gillaroo loch is only three miles from the inn, and in Loch Assynt larger feroxes are more frequently taken than in any other loch in the county. Although vexed to have only one day to spare for so fertile an angling range, we determined to make the most of it, and throw no chance of a heavy fish away. We immediately set about catching baits of various sizes, and despatched a lad for John Sutherland, the Duke's watcher, asking him to accompany us next day.

There were no fewer than four fishing parties at the inn, each choosing his own sport, and plenty of it to choose from. All of them had tried the large loch for the big fish, but the inn people told us not one salmo-ferox had been extracted this year. A little enclosed pond was easily found, to keep the bait alive during the night, and we soon whipped out the necessary number to stock it.

We were early astir. Of course the live bait were first visited ; and as some of the best had escaped, the fly-rod was again put in commission. My comrade was about to empty our fresh supply into the enclosed pool, when, with eager gesture, he called to me that there was a black rat, with a white throat, walking at the bottom among the trout. I was soon by his side, and at the same moment the little black-and-white intruder sneaked out of his bath and took shelter in a hollow of the rock. He was easily dislodged and captured, when the prize turned out to be that rare species, the water-shrew. We were told that they are numerous in that quarter, although I never met with one in any other part of Scotland.

So clear is the channel of Loch Assynt that, although we trolled deep—for the loch is large, and requires it—we scarcely gripped a weed, and only once or twice raked the bottom the whole time we were out. Some of the best fishing-ground was passed, however, before we had the first run, and landed a very handsome twelve-pound fish. We then trolled down to the island; only common gulls on it, and a pair of mergansers. As the wind was favourable for the return, we came back over the same ground, which is decidedly better for heavy fish than the opposite side, and killed another good ferox. We had only one more run, which slipped off—no other offers; but we were only out from twelve till four, being obliged to be at Loch Inver in the evening. We never fished the lower end of this fine trolling loch, whither all the heaviest feroxes resort.

During this visit to Sutherland I had enjoyed the unexpected treat of going over the Duke's Museum of the natural history of the county. Only specimens killed on the estates are admitted, and, like the hieroglyphic histories of Mexico, a naturalist could from them surely discover the character of this large and interesting tract of country. The golden eagle stood for the mountain and deer forest; the erne for the savage rock coast; the phalaropes, sand-pipers, and tringas told of sandy, gravelly creeks and harbours; the black and red throated divers, and many fresh-water dabblers, of the lonely hill lochs; the peregrine vouched for grouse-moors, or rocks swarming with sea-birds;—in fact, there was no department of wild sport, belonging either to Highlands or sea-coast, that had not its representative in this zoological congress. One of the greatest curiosities was an albino sea-eagle. There was also a white jackdaw. The head-keeper pointed out what he called the black eagle. This, however, was a male golden one, rather darker in the feathers than usual. The late Professor MacGillivray, of Aberdeen, held sanguine belief of another small kind of eagle which bred in the Highlands. He never was able to prove it; and with the exception of one or two stragglers of the little spotted eagle, no third species has ever been detected.

We hired the only craft in Lochinver to cross the Minch to Stornoway, where the west-coast steamboat calls. A filthy little smack, and dirtier skipper, with a pair of squab cabin-boys for crew, were not inviting, but we had no choice. When they were weighing anchor and hoisting sail, we were accosted by the old fishing-guide, who had till then been unsuccessfully fishing for his "morning." A bottle of ale at once uncorked the full tide of his gasconading folly. He first boasted of a brother, a sergeant in a Highland regiment. One of the fishing gentlemen quietly asked if he had not deserted. Neil's fury knew no bounds. "He deserted his wife then?" suggested Mr ——, who thoroughly knew his man. "He was never merried," stuttered old hobnails, choking with passion. "Then how could he desert his wife?" was the adroit turn. Neil's muddled dilemma at this query was comical in the extreme. The stake-nets were in full view. The old fisherman, of course, was bragging of what he could do in that way. "Gie me a bag-net," quoth Neil. "I've none to give; and if I had, I would put your ugly head in it," retorts the salmon-angler, who hated the very name of the deadly tool that spoilt his sport. We left old Neil as mad as a bull in a net.

"Where's her head?" roars the skipper from the bulkhead cabin. "She's east by waast!" shout the crew. With a few tacks we easily cleared the islands of Loch Inver, and the breeze being light and fair, we stood across for Stornoway harbour. What an enchanting sail! In full view were the rugged bluffs and headlands, with a background of heathery hills. In the distance the sun glanced on the bald tops of the rocky mountains gradually fading out of sight until they mingled with the warm blue sky. At the end of Storehead, a high narrow stone rears itself so exactly like a lighthouse that few could discover the cheat. Often a hatch of Mother Carey's chickens were clustered on the curling water. Now and then a stray one would flit past our "bow," so like a swallow as to justify the sailors' other appellation of the sea-swallow. I had never seen the stormy-petrel in his native element, and much enjoyed a peep through my telescope at many a group of these so-called birds of the tempest. Yet, spite of the stormy-petrel, the ocean slept calmly that night,—so calmly that I passed it pacing the deck, gazing at the radiant sunset and gorgeous rising, now so nearly blended—listening to the cries of the sea-birds, some so exquisitely plaintive, and others so wild and unearthly as to seem voices of spirits from the depths below.

Notwithstanding the novel excitement of our night cruise, it certainly was a relief to escape from the greasy skipper and his nauseous boat. He had disgusted us by recklessly cutting through the herring-nets, treating the remonstrances of the fishermen with supreme contempt. On one poor fellow, who, in agony for his net-rope, ventured to call him "no gentleman," he fired such a volley of disgusting expletives, as seemed in his own opinion fully to vindicate his claim to the aristocratic title. I frequently checked him, but, being half-seas-over, he forgot himself the next moment. We could not but wish him as prosperous and *speedy* a return voyage as befell two Loch Lomond boatmen equally well primed with grog. In the dusk they hoisted sail from Inverbeg for the top of the loch, but immediately ran aground on a sandbank. "Here she goes," says the steersman. "Spanking through it," adds his shipmate, passing the whisky-bottle. When day broke (feeling sure they must have made their port), they could only explain it by assuring each other that "the loch had turned topsy-turvy in the nicht."

On casting anchor in Stornoway harbour, our tipsy captain volunteered to direct us to a comfortable lodging, "set up by a freend o' his own, express for the quality;" but we were too well acquainted with himself to seek an introduction to his friends. After demanding an exorbitant fare, promising fairly to reach Stornoway in time for the Clansman steamer, *as he more than suspected*, she had gone the day before. The Irish cabman who answered, when a friend of mine left the amount of hire to his conscience, "I'd rather lave it to your honour's; for to tell ye the truth, mine's not worth a farthin'," *had* a conscience, though a worn and battered one. This fellow evidently had none, so I saved myself the trouble of a useless appeal. We asked a fisherman in Stornoway which was the best inn. "Well, sir, the hottle's the best inn." The "hottle" was easily found, where the first object that presented itself was a stag's head and antlers, such as could not easily be matched in the overcrowded forests of modern days. The landlord's grandfather had been forester to Lochiel, and this noble heirloom was preserved as a memento of his rifle.

The whole fishing village—to borrow a phrase from one of themselves—seemed "indulging in dirt." The herring-fishers bad enough; the women-curers worse, if possible. They brought to my mind the predicament of an Edinburgh clergyman (always particularly neat and trim in his own attire), when an applicant for marriage presented himself in the most disgusting figure that ever darkened his study door. "When is it to take place?"—"Directly, sir." "You mean after you have cleaned yourself?"—(Looking down at himself with evident satisfaction,) "Och, I'm weel enough." "You couldn't be married in such a dirty state?"—"*Me* dirty! What if ye saw *hir!*"

Hearing that there was a real live hermit in the neighbouring grounds of Sir James Matheson, we had the curiosity to visit his cell. He was a more favourable specimen than his better-known brother anchorite of the Holy Loch. At the cave among the rocks, a short distance from his house, with his sheep-dog "Lassie" at his foot, the gentle old man was seated. His white beard and contented expression harmonised exactly with the stillness around. His only trouble appeared to be the moustache, which annoyed him when "supping his kale." Looking earnestly at mine, he inquired if his would grow out the same way when they were "lang." Upon my saying there was a kind of pomatum would set them right, he was eager to find out whether the doctors sold it. We had a sight of his little library of Gaelic books, and a draught out of his spring-well. On returning to the town, Sir James's ferryman civilly offered to row us across the river, and when we told him the hermit's trouble—"He gets three shillings a-week for that beard o' his; he may weel buy the sauve for his mistachies."

Returning by the Clansman, we shipped the "Abbot of Iona" in the Sound of Mull. He informed us that his predecessor, St Columba, had first settled at Salen, in Mull, but being dissatisfied with the water, removed to Iona. "The Abbot," so called by his co-presbyters, mentioned a little island on his territory of Icolmkill, which only keeps three sheep. Take off one, and the grass grows rank enough to entice the wild geese, who soon starve the pair of sheep. Put on four, and the islet can't support so many. The three sheep crop the grass just bare enough to keep off the geese, and not too bare to starve themselves. The island minister also described a large whale seen about ten days before. It made its way from Craignure to the lighthouse. Some time before a fleet of three appeared at the head of the Sound; the largest, he thought, would measure thirty yards. The bull-whales are often dangerous, by following boats and upsetting them. In dark weather, especially about dusk, they might rise under a boat without seeing it; of course, a capsize must take place. "The Abbot" has seen them jump, like a salmon, fifteen yards clear of the sea, and come down with such a splash that the motion would swamp a boat. He added gravely, "I would not like to be near them in a craft of forty tons."

At Tobermory a most pompous piper boarded the Clansman, but some queer groans and quavers made it somewhat suspicious that the pipes were "in the wind's eye." However, a rival started up from Oban, in the shape of a blind lad and his fiddle. I daresay his pale face and sightless orbs assisted, but he soon silenced the blustering piper. Duncan tied up his chanter, and, creeping to the top of the paddle-box, looked down in haughty disdain on the degenerate audience. The blind lad, happily ignorant of the savage eye glaring down on his performance, waxed his fiddlestick, scraped away at his masterpieces, and pocketed his pence in quiet content. Next morning, when we stepped ashore at Greenock, we found that *for once* the homely fiddle had fairly routed the great war-bagpipe, the latter having taken advantage of the night to cover a retreat.

THE SOUND OF MULL.

The Island of Mull offers no great temptations to the sportsmen of August. Its streams are scarcely more than brooks, only worth a salmon-angler's attention after floods, during the short period when the white water has run out, and the brown current brawls down in volume to the sea. The fish are then pressing up to the moor-lochs which feed the streams; but should the angler miss these few fortunate hours, he must content himself with any sea-trout which may linger when the water is subsiding, if not too late even for them.

On no part of the island does grouse-shooting come up to a fair average; and although one may often get a good day at black-game in the beginning of the season, they are still far less plentiful than on the mainland, and soon seek shelter in the tangled woods, where most of the shots are unsatisfactory snaps. Towards the end of autumn these woods and covers are much frequented by old blackcocks. If there are many trees of any size among them, pretty fair chances may be obtained by means of a slow, steady dog. When scared by the dog, an old blackcock is very apt to take refuge in the first tall tree, making a kind of *coo*, which may easily betray his roost. The dog, meantime, patiently watches, and so engrosses the attention of the bird as often to procure a tolerable chance. It is a good deal like stalking capercailzie; and as morning and evening are the best times, one or two of these shy birds may be bagged before beginning or after finishing a regular day's range in open ground. You require a knowing dog, such as would make capital work *against wind* by footing the birds. I have had dogs so thoroughly up to it, as to make a steady point from the foot of the birds, then circle round for the wind, and thus place the game between themselves and me. A fair shot is the probable result of these clever tactics.

In Mull, these rugged black-game copses are chosen retreats of the deer, which scarcely ever dare show themselves on the open hills; consequently the deer-sport is confined to wood-driving. Every strip of any size has its own complement, more or less, according to circumstances. They shift from covert to covert, of course, with high winds; so that a wood which contained scarcely any one day, may be found to harbour twenty the next, from a change of weather. The first year I shot there, an old hind and her calf *never* left my largest covert. She was not disturbed; and next year, though another calf was added, the former one remained with her also. I could have found the three quite easily any day the whole year round. I noticed a still more rare instance of family affection among my flock of sheep in Aberdeenshire. One of the ewes had a jet-black lamb, which was reared on account of its beauty. Next season this lamb had another just like itself; but the grandmother, having none, seemed fonder of the little one than even its own mother, and the three never separated from each other, but kept apart from all the rest of the flock.

As deer in the more open woods keep far ahead of the beaters, there is generally little difficulty in sending them through one or other of the numerous passes. The day before leaving Mull in October, although I got no chance of a shot, and was early stopped by heavy rain, we had as pretty a wood-drive as the island could show. My muster of twelve beaters under the old weaver were in full march for Garmony wood by nine o'clock. "Shamish Weaver" boasts that for thirty years he has never been absent from a Scalastal hunt, and enjoys one with perhaps even more zest than the laird himself. He is a clannish man, loves his wild island, and has a stake in it as long as there are fish in the sea, or deer on the hill. I should like to introduce him to the drunken penniless "wabster" of the burgh, who, upon being told that his principles would lead to a national bankruptcy, doggedly dived his fingers to the bottom of his pewter snuff-mull, and muttered between his teeth, "I'll staund the risk." Shamish probably would be unable to comprehend what national bankruptcy meant, but rather than stand the risk of the woods and the nets, and the cobles and the deer of Mull falling into other hands, he would sink "reform," and the "rights of man," and "social equality," and his burgh brother of the loom along with them, to the bottom of the Sound.——Proud as a general, he is marshalling his troops for a new point of untried strategy —namely, to reverse the usual course, and bring up the deer from the south to the north passes. We have a finer view of the hunt by this experiment of the weaver's, but it has the disadvantage of giving the deer far greater choice of passes; a decided objection when there are few guns, as in the present case, to guard them. I chose my stance by a rock that gave a bird's-eye view of the open passages where the deer were most likely to cross when pressing in advance of the beaters, whose discordant yelling was heard now loud and clear, then suddenly dying away according to the inequalities of the ground. The hunt was still far back when I spied two deer picking their steps through a vista of the wood. Sometimes they would face about to listen, and again, with a dissatisfied shake of the head, resume their shambling trot. Couched among the heather, and screened by my granite rock, I was watching their wayward path, hoping they might choose a course within range of either of the two rifles guarding the upper passes. My speculations about them were abruptly ended by a glance at the moving legs of three deer stealing quietly among the tree-stems right up to my rock. When almost within distant range they halted, faced the steep, and the leading hart, with arched neck and ears thrown forward, stood staring at some object on the heights above. It was Shamish Weaver, who, by a masterly manœuvre, was trying to turn them back again into my pass. What a picture was before me!—the old grey man, like a wizard of the mountain, casting a charm over the spell-bound deer. There was the majestic leading stag still as a statue, but yet so graceful and lifelike, petrified at the maniac figure stamping and raging before him. At length he decided on facing the seen danger, and spite of the raving and screaming, and the very peats which the weaver, in his frenzy, hurled down, crossed leisurely within pistol-shot, and gained the wide hill.

In so clear a wood as Garmony, a rough wind or the footprints of a beater will make them burst out anywhere. They will track a man by the foot long after he is gone. Two stalkers, at the close of an unsuccessful day, were resting behind a knoll close by a brook. Three harts came down from the hills to drink. Immediately detecting human footsteps, the three antlered heads lowered on the scent in a direct line from the men. One of them raised his rifle, fired at the nearest head, which was the only part of the deer he could see, and, to his utter amazement, found he had killed the three, shooting them all fair through the head!

When I doubted the strength of the ball to penetrate three hard skulls, my informant assured me there was no doubt about the matter, and that it was easily proved if I wished.

There are no roe-deer in Mull, which is an advantage, for when deer and roe haunt the same woods, each frequently mars the sport of the other. The roe, being loath to quit the shelter of a good-sized wood, soon becomes so knowing, and hardened to beaters, that, rather than face open ground, they will turn on the hue and cry, and break through the line like sheep. In roe-shooting, therefore, I always prefer a stanch fox-hound, which exposes all their covert doubles and wiles, often amusing and exciting enough to study even should no shot be obtained. Beaters also make roes frisky and uncertain in taking the passes. You never can guess exactly where they may break cover. When pursued by a hound, they are much steadier in pace, and far truer to the usual ground. I have constantly noted that the chances, if fewer in number, are *far surer* when the roe is hunted by dogs than when driven by beaters, although more skill is required to secure them. There is often a great prejudice against the voice of a fox-hound; and I have known men unobservant enough to fancy hares and all other game flying right and left at the sound. Yet it is nevertheless true, that a really good hound will scarcely disturb any quarry but what he is first laid on. An indifferent animal, with an inferior nose, may shift from the old track to a fresher often enough, but such should never be slipped in the coverts at all. A really useful fox-hound for roe or deer should stick to its first scent for hours. By watching narrowly, you will perceive it is not disturbing other game, and that the creatures it is not pursuing will show little alarm, often allowing the hunt to pass pretty near without moving from their ground.

At different periods of my sporting life I had two hounds so true and painstaking that, if their game was not killed, they rarely lost the first track till the close of the short winter day. When the moon was up they have sometimes run the scent far into the night. One of them, after sticking to its track from twelve o'clock noon, and all through the following night, drove the roe into the loch next morning. The hound boldly took the water about forty yards behind the roe.

A few years ago, another stanch hound of mine fairly ran down an old fox. At breakfast-time one winter morning, the sly one, evidently on the look-out for poultry, was winded by grim Damper, who instantly broke away from the other dogs before the kennel. The game-watcher, fancying the hunt was a roe, tried several times to take up the hound. About three o'clock he heard him puzzling over some thick gorse, and when trying to couple him, a fox hobbled out in so distressed a state that he again laid on the hound, who ran into and worried him, after another half-mile's chase. The fox—a large dog, and in excellent condition—had lost two toes from the fore-foot by a trap, otherwise a single hound could never have run him down in six hours. This hound was by no means equal to the two former ones, either in nose or powers of endurance.

In the winter of 1854 we killed twenty-four roes at Blackhall in Aberdeenshire, nineteen falling to my own gun. Of the whole nineteen, only five were killed to beaters, thirteen were hunted out by dogs, and one I killed after stalking it by its tracks in snow. The winter before, I traced another fine buck in the snow, and shot him. But snow-stalking is tedious and uncertain at best, and there are few days in a whole winter when it can be followed with any chance of success. It is useless to try when the snow is ever so slightly crisped with frost. They are sure to *hear you* before you *see them.* After snow has lain a day or two, even should there be no frost, the roe-tracks become so numerous and confused that a man, even with the eye of an Indian, would generally find himself following a circle, or lost in a labyrinth of roe-marks. The only time, therefore, for a snow-stalk, is directly after a fall of snow. A pure white dress and cap are indispensable.

The fox is even more shy of a driving hunt than red-deer, and is apt to take the guns unawares by cantering up to the passes before he is expected. Upon the most distant sound of the hue and cry, if there is a wily one in any part of the wood, he at once begins to retreat after his own peculiarly subtle and methodical style. On the morning of one of the roe-drives above mentioned, I had directed a strong company of beaters to the far end of our largest wood, and could barely distinguish the first faint shouts, when I noticed a fox, with measured, swaggering pace, making for my ambush. His chuckling, self-confident air spoke contempt for the noisy and distanced enemy in the rear, but he had evidently never calculated on an ambuscade so far to the front. It was a fine cross shot, and he fell dead. The drive was nearly two miles behind, and an hour elapsed before they brought up the roes.

The frost and snow seldom last long in Mull, but the winter tempests of the Sound are frequent and sublime. The following sketch from the 'Mountain of the Two Winds '[1] is not in the least overdrawn : " The wind was high yesterday, and the waterfalls of Morven, ascending and spreading in blue curled vapours, looked like the smoke of glowing subterranean furnaces all along the edges of the cliff. I never saw the like in any picture. On the sea, too, the effect was very fine. There was all the clear chill of the northern climates, the colour dark blue ; and as the wind caught the surface, it was, as it were, shivered, and the spray, like pounded ice, blown along with a rattling noise, and whirled into shifting, spiral, waterspout columns, to fall when the gust that supported them sank from exhaustion. When I got to the top of the hill, there was a most terrific gale and snowstorm. The clouds rolled furiously, and one felt as in a chariot of rolling vapour. I sat for ten minutes enjoying it, when all of a sudden the mist cleared away as quickly and majestically as it came. In the thick of it I heard Tom and his dogs a thousand feet below, although I could see nothing but vapour; literally, a voice from the clouds. My dog put up two single ptarmigan, and soon after a pair, all of snow-white hue with black tips, but I only fired one very long shot with No. 7. So it sent out a few feathers, and I hope did little other harm. I then walked along the top to the head of Garmony Burn, which I followed down, and killed three cocks, letting off one, at which the first barrel snapped. To-day all is sunk in gloomy stillness, the reaction of yesterday's fury."

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[1] By my eldest son

My next climb to the cairn-peaks of Dundeveuch (Dundaghavithe) was in fair contrast to this stern scene of savage magnificence. On one of those inspiring summer days, when a light breeze tempers the broiling sun, staff in hand, and coupled dogs by my side, I wound a devious track, after many a halt, to the retreat of the hardy ptarmigan. Comparison rules our feelings more than we are aware, or perhaps would allow. The man brought up among hills, when threading the bleak heather, has little of that lonely depression experienced by the inhabitant of cultivated plains, or the frequenter of courtly cities. He knows many of the mountain-flock by head-mark, is well acquainted with their shepherd, and has made friends with their shy collie. The grouse rise naturally, as if accustomed to man, and dreading his power. The moss-cheeper darts from her hiding among the heath; nor is the social swallow a rare visitor to the trackless moors. But let even this mountain child ascend to the higher regions, where the rock supplants the heather—where the sheep seldom feed, and the grouse are never seen—where the shepherd's whistle and his collie's bark are rarely heard, and the *wild tameness* of the ptarmigan is the certain pledge that destroying man is a stranger there, and even he will know their power, and feel that "this is solitude."

I stood on the crest of Dundeveuch, my eye sated, almost wearied; nothing but mountain and ocean, brown hill and purple sea. On every side grandeur—too still, too great for me, in my present littleness, to enjoy. My dogs stared round languidly; no cover for grouse, this rough pavement, and the sharp points had already frayed their feet. I set them free to examine the ground, for the only game they perhaps had never seen; but their heart was not in their work, and they picked their steps tenderly, heedless even of the glorious sea-eagle which bounded up towards the sky, and, cleaving the air with steady wing, settled down on the opposite cairn: she soon rose again, and returned to her first resting-place. If the desolate splendour was but heightened by the opportune and lonesome flight of the savage bird, the spell was partly broken, for, pealing up from the abyss, but modulated by distance, and echo-like, came the iron voice of the raven. Far, far down the dizzy chasm, timing their wings to their croak, the parent birds seemed scenting prey in the distance, and were guiding their three young ones to the mid-day meal.

The birds and beasts of prey in Mull are scarce, with the exception of Royston crows. I have seen and destroyed a few stoats, but have never yet detected a weasel, or noticed their footmarks on the snow. When snow is on the ground, however, they live much underneath it, among the rough grass, where they find abundance of mice, &c. I once saw a weasel bore through half a foot of snow to the ground below; it soon reappeared, making a fresh hole, but on seeing me slunk back again. I inspected the holes it had made, and they were so small as scarcely to admit my finger. No doubt it had a plentiful table, as well as a comfortable shelter from the blast, the warm coating of snow forming a roof as serviceable to the large family of rats and mice as to their destroyer. There are neither foxes, wild-cats, martens, nor foumarts on the island—at least I have never seen or heard of them. When ranging the hills of my own shooting-ground, I have frequently started the erne, but only once the golden eagle. A few pairs of the former breed annually among the inaccessible cliffs of the western side of the island, and there is often *an eyrie* of the golden eagle on the cliffs of Morven, but I rather think no young ones of this species are hatched in Mull. The absence of blue hares, their favourite prey, may partly account for it.

Lambs and red-deer calves are safe from eagles, unless on steep hills, where they can throw themselves into the air with their heavy burden. On flat ground, instinct warns the eagle not to attempt what she cannot accomplish. In summer, when food is plentiful, eagles eat a little every day, without filling the crop. It is only in winter that they gorge themselves on dead carcasses. The sea-eagle especially is often put to great straits at that season, and will wander far to escape starvation. I examined one shot by a farmer in March 1857 at Hambledon, three miles below Henley-on-Thames. The bird, although large, seemed to be in its second year, as the tail was mottled brown. Most likely it was weak from hunger, for the farmer, at first mistaking it for a boy ! walked leisurely to the root of the tree, and knocked it down with small shot. From its brown tail, the Sassenachs thought it a fine golden eagle.

On the 15th of February 1857, two sea-eagles and their young one of the year kept coursing round my shooting-quarters in Mull for the greater part of the day. They chased and dived after each other in high glee. It being Sunday, they seemed aware of the day of safety, otherwise it is not unlikely that one of the white tails might have been added to our list of specimens for 1858.

A couple of hen-harriers always hatch on one of my lower moors, and both of them frequently give the stubble-fields a range in autumn. Sparrow-hawks and kestrels are common all over the island. One of the former had the coolness to strike down a thrush before our door, and was itself struck down by my son's gun, when carrying off the musical *morceau.* The peregrine, though numerous among the wilds of Morven, seldom crosses over to Mull. When swimming in the Sound early one morning, I heard great commotion among the sea-birds. No wonder, for there was the peregrine with one of them in its talons, within a few yards of my head, which it most likely mistook for a seal ! It flew with all speed to the mainland, and had evidently made a raid on Mull, returning home with the plunder like a true freebooter. A short time after, a peregrine, probably the same, dashed at a sly old mallard scared out of a ditch by my scringe-netters. With a loud screech the mallard dropt like a stone among the fishermen, when the falcon, foiled in the stoop, sheered off across the sea to Morven. The common buzzard I have sometimes seen in the more remote districts, and the great corbie seems to thrive among the extensive sheep-walks of all the wilder hills.

The Royston or grey crow is, however, by far the most formidable foe to game, for one of these birds will destroy as many grouse in the egg as twenty golden eagles will after they are full-fledged. The other rapacious birds are thinly scattered over the island, but vast numbers of these crows occupy the woods and hills in spring and summer, crowding the shores during autumn and winter in large flocks. They are nearly as destructive as the raven to young lambs, and their instinct at once detects the sickly sheep, whose eyes they scoop out in a moment with their wedge-bill. Of course the shepherds are mortal enemies to the "hoodachs," as they call them, and ably second our efforts for their destruction. The only effectual way to deal with such numbers is by poison. To prevent mischief, I gave orders that the poisoned baits should be laid chiefly on the islet-rocks along the coast, and, unless absolutely necessary, to place none on the mainland. As a general rule, the banks of either fresh or salt water are good places to plant traps. Winged vermin especially much frequent the shores for any deposits of carrion washed up by the waters. In rugged districts of sea-coast, where wild-cats are not extinct, they prowl the shores nightly in search of dead fish cast up by the waves, and are easily trapped by a piece of stale fish, which they prefer to fresh. The shore-supply, especially in winter, is considerable, which no doubt is one reason why the grey crows congregate there so much, neglecting their upland feeding-grounds. I have often tried to find out why so many toad-fish are left by the tide every autumn and winter in a dead or dying state, but, like the dead shrew-mice which strew the paths at harvest-time, it yet remains a mystery. Those ugly flat fish, called by the villagers "clocking hens," sometimes grow to an immense size, and when turned on their back, the enormous circular mouth, armed with formidable tiers of teeth, looks not unlike a vermin-trap —a very efficient one, too, to its owner! When grounded alive, the toad-fish loses strength gradually, until at last the only sign of life is a languid flap of the flippers at long intervals. It is very destructive to other fish, and so ravenous that a full-grown cormorant was taken out of the stomach of one entangled in the stake-nets of Tongue. The term cormorant is most appropriately applied to the greedy; for not only does that bird consume its own weight of fish *per diem*, but the large mouthful it can bolt seems like a feat of magic. In this case the biter was bit, and the stake-netters were in excellent humour with the sea-monster for having played so good a practical joke. Another curious instance of a fish having swallowed a large bird was told me by Sanderson, the bird-stuffer, Edinburgh. He says that the only Sclavonian grebe received by him, except the one I sent in the winter of 1860, was taken out of the stomach of a cod!

Fish are certainly more voracious than either birds or animals, and are also more apt to prey upon their own species. I had ocular proof in the summer of 1859 that the fresh-water eel is as great a cannibal as the pike. One of my children set a line, baited with an earth-worm, in the burn that runs past Scalastal, in Mull. A small eel took the bait, and was itself swallowed by a big one. Although untouched by the hook, the large eel was pulled ashore before disgorging its tiny neighbour. It was nearly as thick as a man's wrist, and weighed five pounds.

Carrion and grey crows not only search out and devour vast numbers of eggs, but are able to destroy young birds of considerable size. Even jackdaws sometimes feed their nestlings with very young game, but only in parched summers, when the supply of slugs and worms fails. One very dry season, I remember two nides of pheasants nearly all devoured by a pair of daws. The pheasants, when hatched, were placed, with their bantam foster-mothers, in coops under some large trees, in the hollow trunks of which the daws were also rearing their brood. Every day the keeper missed one or two young pheasants. Completely puzzled, he determined not to quit them till he had detected the thief. At last down hops the daw, peering about, until a young pheasant strayed a little farther than the others. It was instantly picked up like a grub, placed in a fork of the tree—a tap on the head, and then the young jacks breakfasted on pheasant. The keeper shot the old daws, and the remaining young pheasants were unmolested. All game above a week old are, however, safe from jackdaws, and they never attack birds when they can procure their more natural food.

Huge Norway rats are very abundant in the stubble-fields that skirt the Sound of Mull. They leave their snug places of abode as soon as the corn ripens, and never quit the fields till driven away by the cold. Were they as thickly scattered over the ground in spring, they would no doubt do great injury to the young game; but at that time they live much more in colonies, and hide themselves in barns and outbuildings, where they rear their young. When shooting partridges on the banks of a stream, one of our dogs made a steady point into the pool. He had winded a Norway rat, which jumped into the water and dived. I saw the creature struggling to keep under, a few inches below the surface, until, disabled by a shot, it crept under the bank, where I picked it up dying. From first to last, this land-rat had been fully half a minute under water, and never put up its head for breath, except when striking ground to creep ashore.

The adder is also common in Mull, and of course destroys *very young* game; but as it preys on vermin too, perhaps the good it does counterbalances the evil. A few years ago, a full-grown field-mouse was found in the stomach of an adder killed near me in Kincardineshire; while another had managed to catch and swallow a young bird. They must have the same power of extending the jaws as the boa-constrictors have; and it would be quite as wonderful, though less astounding, to see an adder seize and bolt a large field-mouse, as to witness the gigantic boa's performance with an antelope.

If proper remedies be used at once, the bite of an adder, however severe, is not generally fatal. In July 1860 the child of a shepherd in Mull was bitten by one basking in the sun on the cottage doorstep. No doubt the creature struck in self-defence at the little hand attempting to catch it; for when the distracted mother flew to her child, the adder was luxuriously coiled up, enjoying the sunshine, and never tried to escape till she threw a stone, when it wriggled under the flags. In her terror, the poor woman magnified the adder into a horrible monster, covered with bright-coloured hair. The shepherd instantly killed a fowl, splitting open the body, and applying the warm halves to the wound. The poison was thus sucked out, and, on the application of sweet-oil well rubbed in, the black and swollen arm began to look more natural, and the pain subsided. In a few days it was quite well.

Unless forced to defend themselves, adders are quite as timid as mice or rats. If seized adroitly by the tail, and lifted off the ground, they have no power to turn on the hand that holds them. When they attempt to screw up the head, a gentle shake sets them straight again. I brought home three very fine ones for preservation in this way; and when I laid them down on the lawn, they were so cowed that, far from showing signs of fight, they had just spirit enough to attempt escape. The most defiant hisser I detected in early summer; the other two, taken in autumn, seemed a male and a female. One of them had devoured a frog, mouse, or bird, and was corked up in whisky with the signs of its gluttony very apparent. The pair were discovered under the same fir-tree among the heather. Two days after securing the first, the same person warned me of its neighbour.

The winter-shootings of the "Sound" amply compensate for the dearth of summer and autumn sport. The late Sir Fowell

Buxton wrote to a friend his "serious opinion that good woodcock-shooting was a preferable thing to glory." Few senators would sink self so low as to rank the flight of the woodcock higher than flights of oratory, and fewer still would even have the honesty to record it if they did. But in singling out the pursuit of this bird, the great anti-slavery advocate showed how much more exciting it was to him than any other shooting. With the exception of wild-fowl, I quite agree with him, and these two sports are certainly the strength of the Sound of Mull.

The first hard frost generally brings the best flight of woodcocks. The succeeding frosts, even though more severe, seldom produce so many birds. Wild-fowl, on the contrary, crowd the shores in exact proportion to the severity of the weather; and should the frost be more than usually intense, and the storm protracted, rare and curious specimens constantly turn up.

Of all shooting comforts a really useful water-retriever is most rare. Of late years I have discarded three dogs of this description, all pronounced first-rate and thoroughly broke, by their trainers—men who were considered no mean judges of the capabilities of a sporting dog. One of these swimming paragons was too off-hand to reflect; another, though cautious, was self-willed and sulky; while the third, being well endowed with common-sense, and good temper to use it, now and then unfortunately carried his gift to the extreme of discretion, by refusing to face a cold or stormy sea.

When the days were, like the old Aberdeen sermons, "short and cauld and clear," my son went down to Mull for some winter shooting. He had only a knowing quiet-tempered old pointer, who had never either retrieved or taken the water in his life. One of the first killed shots, a fine Merganser drake, was being rapidly floated away by the tides: disdaining to imitate the discreet retriever, he instantly plunged into the sea—no uncommon winter exploit—and brought the bird to land. The pointer, whose aid he thought it useless to invoke, watched the whole proceeding from the rocks, and thoroughly comprehended it. Soon afterwards, on his master firing into a flock of turnstones as they flitted past, and dropping three in the water, he volunteered his unsought services, and brought them one by one to the shore. Since then, although he never attempts to mouth game on land, he duly recovers what falls into the water, and in approaching wild-fowl is quite as careful not to spoil the shot as most "thorough-broke" retrievers.

About the beginning of February this useful creature died of inflammation, most likely consequent on the change of his profession. His master had again to do the work himself, and the last day he was out—the 7th of February—had two long swims after disabled widgeon, both of which he landed.

For courage and devotion to his chief, this pointer might have matched a "'45" clansman; but, like the old Highlander, I once saw him show evident signs of superstition. When ranging a grass-field, he pointed a hare, which soon moved from her form, rearing herself on hind-legs straight as a small gate-post. The dog at once showed evident signs of uneasiness, by breaking his statuesque position, looking over his shoulder for advice, and twitching his tail most nervously. But when "puss," pursuing her advantage, actually paced ten yards towards him, erect as a drill sergeant, he fairly turned tail, and, with every sign of terror, took shelter behind his master. There were several witnesses besides myself to this reversal of nature—viz., the hare pursuing the dog. Most likely her young were near.

PARTING WORDS ON SPORT.

Sport comprehends a variety of bodily and mental exercises combined, which produce pleasant excitement in their performance, and by anticipation of the result; and which have a definite object for their aim, the accomplishment of which is the motive-power. Take away all excitement from man, and existence would be a dull, dormant, stagnant thing, without interest, without object, and without joy.

By field-sports are usually meant hunting, shooting, and fishing—although cricket, football, and other outdoor games are sometimes included—and a sportsman is generally known as a devotee of the gun or rifle, of the fishing-rod or hunting-field: but this is simply, again, a conventional word; for, in reality, the whole human race are sportsmen or sportswomen.

The various forms in which the love of excitement or sport develops itself among the sons and daughters of men may be called legion; for there is not a grade of healthy life, however monotonous it may seem to be, where a careful observer need long be puzzled to detect the sparkling spring that refreshes and brightens the dreary waste which, without it, life would certainly become.

To some, books and study are the only sport they can appreciate. A lad, who had much distinguished himself at school, was asked by a class-fellow to spend a part of the vacation with him on the banks of a noted salmon-river. The water being in excellent ply, the host intended for his friend the intense delight of hooking a salmon. What was his chagrin after breakfast next day, to find him under the shade of a huge tree surrounded by his tomes, and perfectly callous to all else except their absorbing contents! A remonstrance only brought down the retort that, "Apart from the cruelty, what amusement could there be in slaughtering fish or birds? For his part he could see none." Had these two lads exchanged occupations for the day, in place of sport it would have been misery to both.

A few years ago I paid a visit at a country-house, the proprietor of which was a sagacious and successful merchant. The shooting was good and varied, and a large party was arranged for a beat of the coverts, but "the Laird" did not join it. Next day, when driven by my host's coachman to the railway station, I said, "Your master does not seem to care much for the gun." "Bless you, sir, he cares more for doing a smart stroke of business than for all the shooting in the county!"

When I was a youth, a London belle of the first water married the owner of large Highland possessions, comprehending, among other wild sports, superior salmon-angling. She became a noted rod-fisher, and used often to affirm that one season on the river was worth half-a-dozen in London. Whether she would have thought so before her marriage is doubtful; but, as a matron, she afforded a fair instance of what Chalmers forcibly calls "the expulsive power of a new affection."

Those who occupy the front rank of the various walks of life, as well as the men and women who follow music and painting as a profession, live in an atmosphere of excitement. In comparison with these pursuits, all other sport is tame to them. The most successful are generally wearing themselves out, and become "old before their time." Circumstances, and indeed duty, may prevent some from over-taxing themselves; but how few there are who would have the resolution to abate one atom of a prosperous worldly career, though they half suspected it was killing them by inches! Fame is the very acme of excitement to the truly talented few; and, as the dram-drinker loves alcohol, they love it more than life itself.

The immoderate use of any of God's gifts in course of time destroys all pleasure in them, and a constant craving after excitement defeats its own end. Long ago I watched the downward course of a young nobleman, born to a princely inheritance, but whose chief aim was to spend it on personal gratification. When he was a boy at school, a day's trouting or a shot at the partridges gave the keenest pleasure. As he grew into a man, grouse and deer degraded the stubble-bird in his estimation, and only the nobler game of the hills and the heather could stimulate him to active exertion. He rented a deer-forest, and for a few years deer-stalking and salmon-fishing contented him, at least for the autumn months. Among the last of his northern trips, his attendant told me that, in fishing down a salmon-stream alive with fish, he finished a quart-bottle of the best whisky; thus proving, that on him the excitement of the finest sport in the world had lost half its power, and needed the supplement of a stimulus more potent still. The northern mountains and rivers soon lost their charm; he completed a course of the grossest dissipation by dying in a lunatic asylum.

If possible, a still more melancholy race was run by a Highland chieftain. He was what is called "a favourite of fortune." With excellent talents, and heir to grand sporting estates, he had also wonderful aptitude for all manly recreations, and was considered an expert in most of them. For a time the northern summer and autumn sporting season, with its grouse, salmon, and deer, was his heart's delight; while the hunting-field in the "Shires" supplied uninterrupted winter excitement, without which life would have been a burden. On a Twelfth of August he sometimes never went to bed at all, in order to be on the ground by the first streak of the dawn; and in winter never missed "a meet" if he could help it. The natural consequence followed: active sports palled—he took to gambling and horse-racing to supply their place—was completely ruined, and died in his prime a confirmed sot.

Whether or not sport is indigenous to the soil of the British Isles, it is certain that its practice as a highly honourable pursuit dates from a very early period, probably from the heroic or prehistoric ages. That the chase and capture of wild animals have been the occupation of a *class* in all ages, and in almost all countries, is undoubtedly the case; but I firmly believe that the love of field-sports has been the national characteristic of no other people so much as of our own. When it became so, I do not know. It may have belonged to the ancient Briton, as I am inclined to think, and have taken still deeper root with the advent of those Vikings, or sea-kings, whose feats of daring formed the theme of so many legends and ballads, and the traditions of whose wild exploits are remembered to this day.

Probably this prevailing spirit of sport through all our classes was most nearly approached by the ancient Greeks at their Olympic games, where, as in our hunting-fields, all classes met on equal terms in friendly contest. These games were established among them by leaders whose rare prescience foresaw the advantage of early training and personal emulation in those accomplishments, which are most useful to the soldiers of a people who were almost constantly engaged in war. Let us now, therefore, take into consideration the effect of this sporting element of our constitution on the *physique* of our own nation.

It is not to be denied that a keen appreciation of toilsome out-of-door sports and pastimes has made the sturdy race they are out of British islanders, and that the young aristocrats who have the most means and opportunity for enjoying them are the finest young fellows in Europe. Our veteran generals have often been heard to assert: "It is all very well to have crammed-up successful competitors of military schools for parades and peace campaigns; but for active service in time of war, for the far look-out and quick appreciation of the advantages to be seized by every diversity of country, give me the Nimrods of the chase, or the swift-footed and keen-eyed deathsmen of the grouse and the deer."

What was it in time of war that made our young Guardsmen careless of hardship and examples of endurance to the soldiers under them, but that when sport was changed into earnest, they put in practice in the dread reality of war those lessons they had learned in their mimic campaigns with the beasts and birds of their dear native land?

> "The chase I follow from afar,
> 'Tis mimicry of noble war."

So says "The Douglas"; and many a high-spirited son of Albyn, after a long and weary day on the hills, will cordially endorse the sentiment.

Nor must we omit a word on our venturesome sportsmen of the ocean—those stalwart fishermen who so often brave death in pursuit of their dangerous calling. In every coast-hamlet those noble forms with resolute sunburnt faces, cased in their peculiar fishing-garb, attract the notice and admiration of the wayfarer, and a feeling of confidence and pride gladdens his heart, well knowing that the pick and cream of these splendid types of humanity form the rough material which has made the British navy the envy and the dread of the world.

This passion for the chase and for adventure by sea and land having been transmitted from father to son through many generations, has, I am convinced, had the effect of strengthening in the highest degree our national constitution. I believe that it has done more, and that we owe the courage and endurance of our character to the same cause.

As I do not myself profess to do more than observe, certainly not to analyse, what is going on around me, it is as interesting to me to learn the result of those who trace the *manner* in which different exercises affect our organs, as it is gratifying to be corroborated by them.

Among the many charming shooting-quarters it has been my happiness to live at, the lodges of several were built on the banks of our romantic Highland sea-lochs, full of the smaller varieties of white fish, and also much frequented by the larger kinds, especially when the herring "skull" returned from their migration. As soon as the screaming of gulls and the dull thud of the solan's dive proclaimed the advent of the moving mass of herring, every clachan, shieling, and even hut, along the base of hills girdling the loch, was rife with bustle and preparation. Nets were spread out, lines prepared for baiting, and every skiff and coble launched that dared be trusted to keep above water, even in a landlocked sea.

My first effort was to procure herring sufficient to bait three hundred hooks; and directly the baited line was packed neatly in its creel, we rowed to the fishing-banks. The line, when sunk, was allowed exactly one hour before beginning to haul it; and if you had hit on a shoal of fish, the excitement of lifting a long line could scarcely be surpassed. Down in the depths you are warned by a heavy struggle to be careful in your "draw." Two-pounders, three-pounders, and even fish of six or seven pounds, successively emerge from the abyss, and are gaffed by your henchman; but still the monster to come gives ample proof that these goodly fish are but weaklings when pitted against him. At last, his enormous outline is dimly seen deep, deep down; and with increasing caution you bring to the surface a thirty-pound cod or ling. A fair show of weighty fish is likely to be secured ere the last hook is raised, when, with quiet satisfaction, you find the coble loaded with some great and many fair-sized denizens of the deep—cod, ling, gurnet, skate, plaice, haddock, and mighty conger-eels.

At low tide these lochs are particularly adapted for the sea-fly, and an invalid sitting snugly in his two-oared boat, refreshed by the summer breeze, may bring in numbers of lythe, the bigger ones affording fine play. The whiting-beds also are pleasing hand-line amusement on a June or July evening. When in good take, whiting seize the bait as soon as the lead touches the ground; but there is considerable knack in hooking and bringing them into the boat. Unless you strike the instant you feel the quiver of the fish when taking the bait, and pull up steadily without jerking, there is every chance that it may slip off, either when it first seizes the hook or on its passage to the surface. I have always noticed that ladies, from their finer touch, are the greatest adepts at this branch of fishing sport.

The late Sir William Murray, of Ochtertyre, preferred deep-sea fishing to all other varieties of sport. He had his four trained men, who were allowed the day to themselves, and the best food that could be procured; but he sternly exacted their services during the long, mid-winter, dreary nights.

When darkness set in, with lamp in hand he roused his crew, and pulled or sailed for the deep-water fishing-banks, about eight miles distant, where the long lines were "shot." Some skins of the leviathans he landed are still preserved in

Bute; and I well remember his exciting and graphic account of a captured skate two hundred pounds in weight! He was two hours in moving the flat monster from the ground, to which it had glued itself, his boatmen all the time assuring him it was only "a fast"; but he kept firm to his own opinion, and was rewarded at last by a yielding and shaking movement, which caused "his heart to leap into his mouth." By careful play, the ponderous creature was raised, and tired sufficiently to follow the boat. As soon as it was coaxed into shallow water, by the help of several long gaffs it was trailed high and dry upon the sandy beach.

About the gloaming of the 28th of September 1874, a message was sent to me from my friends James and Robert Turner, fishermen of the Solway, that they had captured a fish "the like o' which they had never seen afore; and they would feel mickle obleeged if I would step doun and tell them its name." They would have fetched it up, they added, but its weight was an insuperable obstacle.

As their fishing-station was only a quarter of a mile distant, I was soon alongside of the monster, which proved to be a small specimen of the basking shark, nine and a half feet long, with three tiers of teeth—the front row, as in all sharks, being mobile. This shark, I believe, is the only non-voracious species, feeding chiefly on marine plants and small fish, and it attains the enormous length of forty feet. It is distinguished easily by the small size of the teeth.

There are often rare and curious fish taken both with net and line by our fishermen; and their life, if full of peril, has abundance of excitement too.

I have now endeavoured to show, first, that all the world's a hunting-field, and all men and women hunters and huntresses in it, the quarry being that pleasurable emotion caused by raised spirits—in other words, excitement. Next, that over-indulgence in this state of mind, even in sacred things, is pernicious, and, if persevered in, will naturally end in satiety and weariness. Lastly, that this element of our nature was given us for wise and beneficent purposes, and, if not misused, may often cheer and refresh us when worn by the carking cares of life. Let us be careful, then, not to turn the blessing into a curse by the immoderate use of it, and then we may be daily grateful to our Creator, even for that often much-abused pastime called "Sport."

LIST OF MR COLQUHOUN'S SHOOTING PLACES.

Arrochar House—shootings and fishings—Dumbartonshire.

Kinnaird House and shootings, with permission of salmon-fishing in the Tay—Perthshire.

Ardenconnel, with permission to shoot over the Luss estates—Dumbartonshire.

Langlee, with grouse and lowland shootings, and leave to fish in the Tweed, and shooting of Philiphaugh and Stow Moor—Roxburghshire.

Leny House and shootings, with the exclusive leave of wild-fowl shooting on Loch Vennachar; also salmon-fishing on the Teith—Perthshire.

Kilmun Hills, with the salmon, grilse, and trout-fishing of the River Echaig—Argyleshire.

The Hopes, with grouse and partridge shooting of Milknowe—East Lothian.

Newpark, with the grousing of the Colzium Hills, and trout-fishing on the Almond—West Lothian.

Sonachan House and shootings, on Loch Awe—Argyleshire.

Blackhall and shootings, with five miles' salmon-fishing on the Dee—Aberdeenshire.

Buttergaske—grouse and partridge shootings—Perthshire.

Scalastal shootings, in Mull—Argyleshire.

Garth House—shootings and salmon-fishing, with leave over the River Lyon—Perthshire.

Glenforsa House and shootings, with salmon-fishing on the River Knock and Loch Baa; added to Scalastal shootings aforesaid—Argyleshire.

Glenfalloch House and shootings, with the exclusive right of the River Falloch—Perthshire.

Kames Castle, in Isle of Bute, with the whole wild shootings of North Bute.

Ballimore on Loch Fyne, house and shootings, and salmon-fishing on the River Ruel—Argyleshire.

Kirkhill Castle and shootings, and salmon-fishing on the Stinchar (Lugar)—Ayrshire.

Knockbrex—Galloway.

Arrochar House and shootings—my first place and the last.

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THE END.

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